

# BRIARCLIFF QUARTERLY

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# BRIAR-CLIFF QUARTERLY

THE VISIT BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS POETRY  
IN WORLD WAR II BY KOCH THE DANCE BY  
PARKER TYLER FICTION BY LEANE ZUGSMITH AND  
FRED URQUHART POETRY BY MACLEOD DEVLIN  
GARRIGUE ELUARD HILL NEMEROV ARAGON  
WAHL SARTON CAHOON LITERARY INTELLIGENCE:  
MEXICAN LETTER THE BRITISH THEATRE ART  
BY GUGGENHEIMER STUART DAVIS CRAWFORD  
EMPTAGE BOOKS: OAK TAYLOR  
MILLS HISTORY BY HEIL AND  
QUENEAU

9

FIFTY CENTS



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The *Briarcliff Quarterly* is an international review devoted to the publication and interpretation of contemporary literary and cultural expression in the form of fiction, essays in criticism, poems, and book notices. In addition to printing the work of established authors and critics, the *Quarterly* particularly encourages new and previously unrecognized writers, especially from colleges both in America and abroad. From time to time developments in painting, sculpture, music, and the theatre are appraised. Art reproductions are a regular feature.

Published under the auspices of Briarcliff Junior College, the magazine forwards the educational objectives of the college by being a co-operative activity of teachers and students under the direction of *Norman Macleod* of the English Department. Through participation, members of the student staff learn methods of editorial assembly and critical selection of material, magazine make-up, proofreading, promotion and business operation.

Taking cognizance of the widespread sentiment for world cooperation in all spheres of human culture, and recognizing the need for a medium for expression for the one world community already existing—the international community of the arts—the *Briarcliff Quarterly* strives to reflect the creative spirit transcending national borders.

Editorial contacts are maintained and magazine circulation is assured in the other English speaking countries and in such lands as France, South America, and the Soviet Union. The experimental and the novel are not sought for their own sake, but as they express fresh insights not readily accepted in commercial periodicals.

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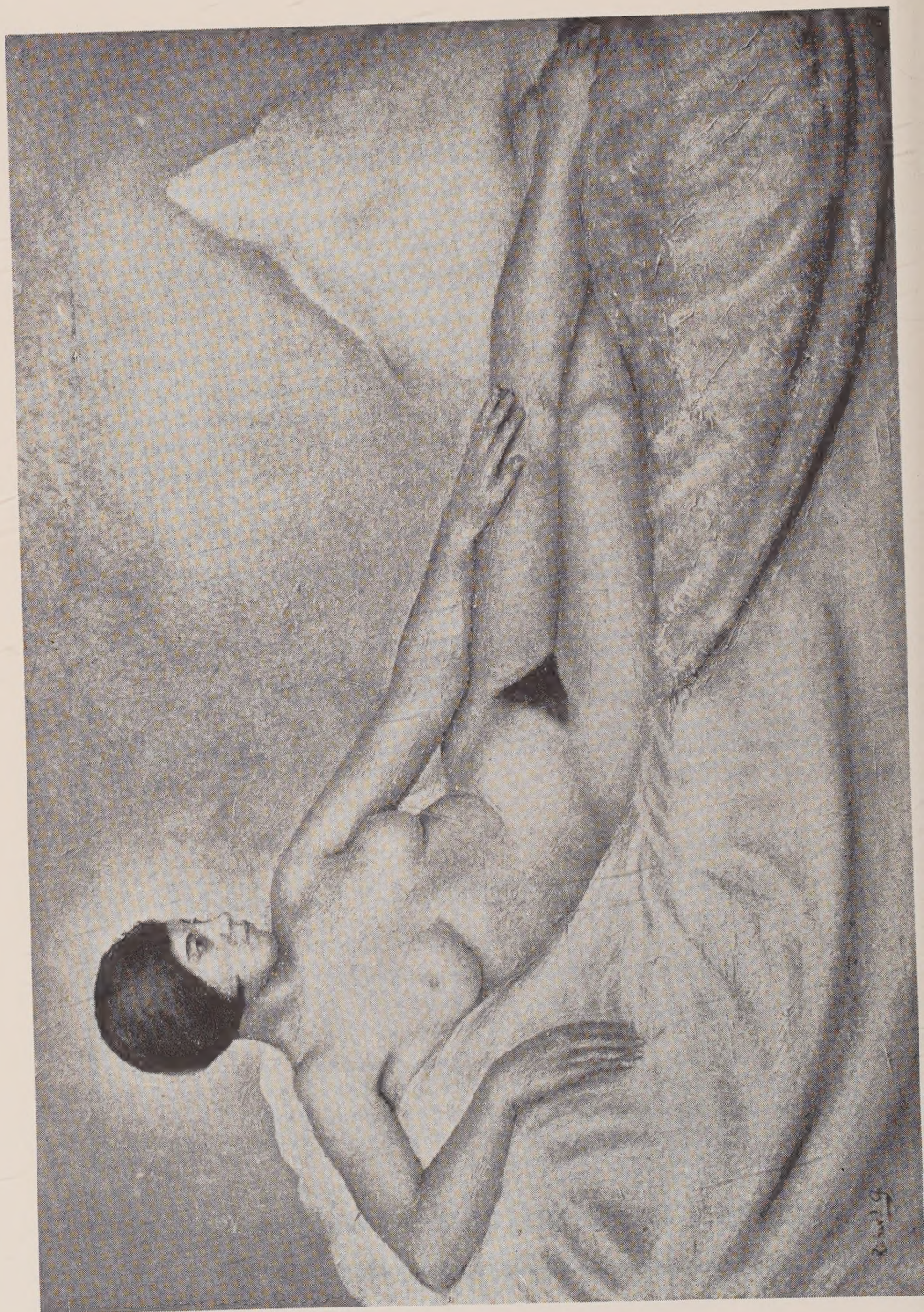
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ACADEMIC STUDY

Richard Guggenheimer



# BRIARCLIFF QUARTERLY

## INTERNATIONAL LITERARY REVIEW

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### Number Nine

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William Carlos Williams

#### THE VISIT

I have committed many errors  
but I warn—the interplay  
is not the tossed body. Though  
the mind is subtler than the sea,  
advancing at three speeds,  
the fast, the medium and the slow,  
recapitulating at every ninth  
wave what was not at first directly  
stated, that is still only  
on the one level.

There are the fish  
and at the bottom, the ground,  
no matter whether at five feet  
or five miles, the ground, revealing,  
when bared by the tides, living  
barnacles, hungry on the rocks  
as the mind is, that hiss as often  
loudly when the sun bites them.

And I acknowledge, the mind is  
still (though barely) more than  
its play. I can see also  
the dagger in the left hand when  
the right strikes. It does  
not alter the case.

Let us resume. The  
naïve may be like a sunny day but  
deceptive  
and is not to be despised  
because it is so amusing to see  
the zigzag and slender gulls  
dip  
into the featureless surface.  
It is fish they are after,  
fish—and get them.

Still I  
acknowledge the sea is there and  
I admire its profundity only  
what does that amount to?  
Love also may be deep, deep  
as thought, deeper than thought  
and as sequential—

thought  
full of detail, let us say, as  
the courts are full of law  
and the sea, weeds and  
as murmurous: that does not  
alter the case either. Yet you  
are right in the end: law  
often decides cases. Well?  
I prefer to go back to my cases  
at the hospital.

Say I am less an artist  
than a spadeworker but one  
who has no aversion to taking  
his spade to the head  
of any who would derogate  
his performance in the craft.

You were kind to take so much  
pains with me and—thank  
you for the view.



Vivienne Koch

## POETRY IN WORLD WAR II (Continued)\*

The war is over but the ballots are still coming in. From Australia, England, Ireland, Scotland, France and the United States the poets speak with an almost unanimous voice. Good, bad and indifferent, traditionalist, experimentalist, and surrealist, they are all agreed in a passionate rejection of war and in a reaffirmation of individual guilt and responsibility for its existence. The dominant temper of these twenty-four volumes of poems is not a joyous one. If I were to toss all of them into the lap of Mr. Brooks, or Mr. Benét, or Mr. Adams, the sheer weight of the death apprehended by the poets would set up some familiar hubbub about the "responsibility" of writers to give us a "hope for the future."

It is true that we have all got fed up with the "skull beneath the skin" convention in modern poetry, often deriving from the fashionable and sometimes badly digested influence of the metaphysical poets. But now we are increasingly confronted with the skulls, and there is very little skin about them indeed. In short, there is nothing literary in this preoccupation. Death is all about us in the world to-day, both death of the body and death of the heart; and that is what the poets, each

---

\* *further sea pieces*. By Forrest Anderson. The Anchor Press. No Price. *Aragon: Poet of the French Resistance*. Edited by Hannah Josephson and Malcolm Cowley. Duell, Sloan and Pearce. \$2.00. *Sea Talk*. By George Bruce. William Maclellan. 6/=. *The Song of Lazarus*. By Alex Comfort. The Viking Press. \$1.75. *London*. By Donald Cowie. Tantivy Press. 5s. 6d. net. *Prose and Verse*. Cowie and Mountain. Tantivy Press. 5s. *The Letter to Sheila Anne and Other Poems*. By D. Von R. Drenner. The Zauberberg Press. No Price. *American Child*. By Paul Engle. Random House. \$2.00. *2nd Poems*. By W. S. Graham. Editions Poetry London. 5s. *Compass*. By John Hewitt. Privately Printed. No Price. *As Iron Hills*. By Flexmore Hudson. Robertson & Mullens, Ltd. No Price. *Indelible Voices*. By Flexmore Hudson. Economy Press. No Price. *The Cloth of Flesh*. Sean Jennett. Faber & Faber. 6s. net. *The Burning Glass and Other Poems*. By Walter de la Mare. The Viking Press. \$2.50. *Some Natural Things*. By James Laughlin. New Directions. \$2.00. *Ha'Ha! Among the Trumpets*. By Alun Lewis. The Macmillan Company. \$1.75. *Short Is the Time*. By C. Day Lewis. Oxford University Press. \$2.25. *Springboard*. By Louis MacNeice. Random House. \$1.75. *Selected Poems*. By Hugh Macdiarmid. Maclellan. 6s. *Selected Poems*. By John Crowe Ransom. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.00. *Ballad of the Bones and Other Poems*. By Byron Herbert Reece. E. P. Dutton & Company. \$2.00. *Generation of Journey*. By Jacob Sloan. The Untide Press. No Price. *ho! watchman of the night ho!* By Lee Verduft. Gemor Press. No Price. *Esthétique du Mal*. By Wallace Stevens. The Cummington Press. \$5.00 & \$12.50.

through his own mode of perception, wish to tell us about. There are exceptions, of course, but they are exceptions of emphasis and not of oversight.

On the whole, this current crop of verse (some, to be sure, representing a lifetime's performance) gives one the impression of great good taste. Not one of these books is really outrageous or bad. Some are savorless and lacking in vigor or originality and yet, on the whole, they represent a remarkably high level of knowledge, discipline, and craftsmanly integrity. Many traditional forms are employed, in some instances with great severity and original effect. The sonnet has become enormously popular, sometimes too popular, as in Paul Engle's *American Child*, a repetitious sonnet sequence built around the data of childhood supplied by his daughter. At the same time, there is an emphasis on the heroic couplet, boldly employed for long satires, as in Mr. Cowie's *London*, or smuggled in by other poets in various attractive disguises. The predominant tone of much of this poetry is didactic and moral. But even where poetic technic is most personal and experimental, it shares the common impulse to re-evaluate the belief and experience of our time.

This winter's yield of verse re-enforces my original feeling (see *Poetry in World War II*, Summer Issue, 1945) concerning the disappearance of cultural tariff walls, as it were, in the semantics of English poetry. The notion of internationalism, in poetry at least, need no longer be a program, for it is already a fact. And nothing anybody can now do can stop the pressure of the exchange. The Irish talk of Chekhov and Thoreau as casually as they mention a place-name of their country, the Scots of Rilke and Rimbaud, the Australians (*there*, perhaps a slight cultural time-lag!) of Marx and Guatemala.

Another facet of this internationalism, and one about which I have mixed feelings, is the increasing willingness of American commercial publishers to bring out foreign poets, although they are still niggardly with our own. Thus, of the nine American poets here represented, only two have been published by commercial presses. Of the remaining fifteen volumes (representing six English poets, two Scots, one Welshman, one Australian, two Irishmen and one Frenchman), five have been printed in this country by commercial presses. That represents one third of the total non-American poetry and is, I think, a surprisingly high figure. While I am in favor of the widest possible publication of foreign poets in this country, I think that in some cases the practice is decided not by merit but rather by two entirely extraneous factors: one, the prevalent snobbism of editorial offices, which makes for an overvaluation of everything not our own, especially if the sales-appeal is limited and requires outside sanction; the other, deriving from the equally pernicious



uncertainty in editorial offices as to what poetry is all about, so that a book already published abroad has twice as many chances for American commercial publication as a first-rate manuscript by an American poet. From the editors' viewpoint, a book in boards is worth two in manuscript.

In spite of this, and perhaps because of the closer relationship existing between the small non-commercial presses and their authors, the production aspects of these books are all to the good. There is a noticeably closer interest in fine printing as well as a growing collaboration between artists and poets. Wallace Stevens' *Esthétique du Mal* is a notable example of beautiful book-making, and the drawings by Wightman Williams are exactly right. But the prohibitive price (\$12.50 and \$5.00) is, I think, a frightful burden for Mr. Stevens' admirers.

\* \* \*

Out of deference to age, and in some instances to quality, I shall consider first the work of the older poets. It goes without saying that the most excellent performances have been turned in by John Crowe Ransom and Wallace Stevens. Mr. Ransom's *Selected Poems* represent a quarter century's dedication to the pursuit of poetry and the study of poetic problems. He has included only five poems composed later than 1927. I am not altogether sure that he has been right in so rigorously eliminating other recent work, but it is a choice he has had every right to make. Thus, with so few recent poems to look at, it is almost fruitless to talk of the direction of Mr. Ransom's development. And perhaps this is just what he would wish to avoid. Yet he tells us that he has arranged the poems substantially in their order of composition, so that apparently he is not averse to judgments of growth.

All of these poems are familiar to Mr. Ransom's admirers, so that it is noteworthy that so many of them still carry surprises on re-reading. One sees, in the total view, an observably heavier reliance on "literary" diction in the earlier poems than in the later, manifested by a fondness for archaic words, courtly turns of speech in conversation, and injunctions with a Biblical cast of syntax. But the temper of Mr. Ransom's poems are unchanged throughout. He is the master of the ironic, in compositions ranging from slight but charming *vers de société*, such as the early "Good Ships" (about a drawing-room encounter), to the enormously clever and complicated intellectual judgment of "Our Two Worthies" ("Jesus the Paraclete / And Saint Paul the Exigete"). In "The Equilibrists," that exquisite metaphysical love poem, he weds his scrupulous linguistic habit to his favorite vantage point—one of omniscience where the poet takes the Olympian view and evaluates the show beneath: ". . . made these lines to memorize their doom":

### *Epitaph*

*Equilibrists like here; stranger, tread light;  
Close, but untouching in each other's sight;  
Mouldered the lips and ashy the tall skull,  
Let them lie perilous and beautiful.*

Although the position of ironic spectator appears to be the one from which Mr. Ransom derives most enjoyment, many of his poems, especially his domestic pieces, seem to be portraits drawn by an intimate, if not close member, of the family. It is this proximity to (yet removal from) his subject, as in "Miriam Tazwell" or the much admired "Dead Boy" and "Blue Girls," which makes possible that rare quality of affectionate address, combined with the strictest sort of moral judgment, which gives the special tone of his irony. The emotional by-product of this fusion is a most unindulgent but nevertheless distinct melancholy:

*The little cousin is dead, by foul subtraction,  
A green bough from Virginia's aged tree,  
And none of the country kin like the transaction  
Nor some of the world of outer dark like me.*

...

*A pig with a pasty face, so I had said,  
Squealing for cookies, kinned by poor pretense  
With a noble house. But the little man quite dead,  
I see the forebears' antique lineaments.*

Equally potent as an element in this delicate irony of the heart is Mr. Ransom's wonderfully dry and understated humour, heightening the banter of the commenting spectator to a kind of choric objectivity. (See "Spectral Lovers," or the brilliant prepositional abuse of the last line in the opening tercet of "Emily Hardcastle, Spinster": "To the stately ceremonial we are not the heroes of." Here the wicked inversion introduces precisely the note of frustration which mounts up as the poem develops to its inevitably negative conclusion.) In "Dog" this humour receives its most terse statement in the word "However," which opens the fourth stanza and, by forcing a shift in the caesura, makes possible a shift in the entire direction of the narrative.

It is an amusing comment on the elasticity of terms like "classicism" that Mr. Ransom, twenty-five years ago the mentor of the Fugitives who affirmed their allegiances with tradition, should be so free of anything conventional or predictable in his poems. "Prelude to an Evening," one of the recent poems, serves as a very good measure of his developed practice. The unfamiliar disposal of adverbs, the attaching of negative prefixes to familiar adjectives, the compounding of nouns, all of these devices he uses in common with so-called "romanticists" like e. e. cummings. The result, in Mr. Ransom's erudite diction, is a curiously effective blend of the strange and the familiar which no programmatic



approach to poetry could possibly contrive. It is likely that Mr. Ransom's small body of poetry will prove, if not the most influential, perhaps the most likely to give continued pleasure of any American poet of his generation.

I can agree with the critic who said of Mr. Stevens' *Esthétique du Mal* that while Baudelaire emphasized the "mal," Mr. Stevens emphasizes the "*esthétique*." Further than that I cannot go. I do not think that Mr. Stevens is equating poetry (art) with "mal," but rather outlining the continuation of the Baudelairian paradox, "*L'homme double*," the terms of which Mr. Stevens has changed. His use of the word "mal" is not at all to be construed as an apology for poetry, but rather as an ironic comment upon the tradition which equates art and "mal." Naturally, this explains only one level of his meaning. Another level is the historical one, where "mal" is the principle of evil, a value whose disappearance Mr. Stevens regrets:

*The death of Satan was a tragedy  
For the imagination . . .  
How cold the vacancy  
When the phantoms are gone and the shaken realist  
First sees reality. The mortal no  
Has its emptiness and tragic expirations.*

But once this has been said, it is necessary to qualify again, for:

*. . . The genius of misfortune  
is not a sentimentalist. He is  
That evil, that evil in the self, from which  
In desperate hallow, rugged gesture, fault  
Falls out on everything: the genius of  
The mind, which is our being, wrong and wrong,  
The genius of the body, which is our world,  
Spent in the false engagements of the mind.*

What the poem is about, then, is a complex of judgments about art (imagination) and "the actual," their oppositions and interactions. Thus, "evil" in a fourth sense means "to lose sensibility, to see what one sees, / As if sight had not its own miraculous thrift, / To hear only what one hears, one meaning alone, / As if the paradise of meaning ceased / To be paradise, it is this to be destitute." And it is this quality of "mal" which is, at the very end of the poem, reaffirmed as the supreme evil:

*The greatest poverty is not to live  
In a physical world, to feel that one's desire  
Is too difficult to tell from despair.  
. . .  
This is the thesis scrivened in delight. . . .*

But as always in Mr. Stevens' contrapuntal mode, there comes the resolution of this attitude, here the sense of wonder at the new universes it is possible for the ego to construct:

. . . out of what ones sees and hears and out  
Of what one feels, who could have thought to make  
So many selves, so many sensuous worlds—  
As if the air, the mid-day air, was swarming  
With the metaphysical changes that occur,  
Merely in living as and where we live."

Although I am not adhering to Mr. Stevens' order, there is a fifth sense, still, to his "mal" and that is the evil of death in life, "the unalterable necessity/ Of being this unalterable animal/ This force of nature in action is the major/ tragedy, . . . Ay-mi!/ One feels its action moving in the blood." And with the exhaustion of the possibilities of evil comes the renunciatory recognition that "Evil in evil / is comparative."

We find, then, that Stevens' investigation of "mal" is, while different from Baudelaire's, perhaps as profound. He is the kind of investigator, however, who seeks to order his data in an irrefutable structure, while Baudelaire was content to explore the paradox of man's nature pragmatically, to present his findings, and to allow us to draw the inferences. Baudelaire's method is that of the explorer; Stevens that of the philosopher (which is not to say that he is one). Both methods have their uses.

Thus, *L'Esthétique du Mal* (like other poems of Stevens) is a study in definition, the main term of which is evil. It is not at all far-fetched to say that the defining method has always been Mr. Stevens' chief way of poetry-making, and that here he has expanded the method into an "*esthétique*" as well. One sentence, bearing the Stevens' hall-mark, as if it were stamped on silver, will suffice here to suggest the possibilities inherent in this method: "The sun in clownish yellow, but not a clown," There is an attempt to define the qualities of things both by naming them, and by a simultaneous refusal to accept the naming as the essence of the thing to which the quality is ascribed. This is, in effect, a logical syllogistic method, and it is this method which Mr. Stevens has applied to the concept of "mal."

But to have said this is to leave out the qualities which differentiate a philosophical poem from a philosophical essay. The extraordinary musicality of Mr. Stevens' writing serves here to amplify the meaning with a kind of insidious sonority growing out of his familiar device of repetition of key words (like *pain*), and from a consistent use of internal rime as well as end rime played off against identical internal rimes. Thus, his recommendation of the acceptance of the "enoughness" of a pagan "now" is accomplished in the most melodious possible way. Sometimes, in fact, there is a kind of insistent blandness in the harmony which makes

one uneasy of a possible undercurrent of ritualistic unction. The total emotional matrix of the poem is liturgical. Within this major (to borrow Stevens' phrase) is the minor of his more familiar habit, that type of psychological reduction to scale which is his supreme gift of irony.

I confess to disappointment in Walter de la Mare's *The Burning Glass*, a collection of recent poems, many of which have previously appeared in England. One had come to think of Mr. de la Mare as a fine craftsman in his somewhat narrow range of performance; one had accepted the historicity of his Georgian diction as very authentic and good of its kind. Now, one feels that, although the familiar terrain is again re-traced, there is a slackening in the skill of the traveller. Many of these lyrics, some of a clearly autobiographical cast and others in the dramatic mould of the ballad, do not come off because of a fault in structure. The point is that Mr. de la Mare has a fondness (as one dependent on balladry would have to have) for dramatic monologue and dialogue. "A Dull Boy," depicting the poet's frustration because of his inability to equal the beauty of nature, is an example of his misuse of this form. After the third stanza there is no necessary or appropriate transition to the question of the imaginary interrogator which opens up quatrain four: "And what didst *thou*?" There is no earthly reason to ask this question except to give the poet a chance to get in a few more apologies which he has failed to list before. The effect is one of a dull and obvious mechanicality in the poem's organization. For the same reason, "Eureka," a satire, breaks down into a flabby sentimentality in the last stanza, here the defect flowing from an absurd reduction of tension in the feeling, introduced for the sake of dramatic contrast, and like melodrama, oversimplifying the problem it wishes to underline. In "Outer Darkness," an examination of Mr. de la Mare's favorite paradox, the self and the anti-self (a paradox from which, I think, he wrings more than his just share of melancholy), the poem again falls apart in the last portion, "Alas, how can anguish and grief be allayed/ In a soul self-betrayed," because it attempts to recapitulate overtly what should be implicit in the poem. Moreover, its echoing of his early "The Listeners" is too close.

I like Mr. de la Mare best in his less ambitious lyrics like "The Creek," "Sheep," "The Frozen Dell" and "To A Candle," where, although the excitement which comes with invention is missing, the almost anonymous language achieves a kind of exquisite propriety. "The Traveler," a long philosophical poem, which like Stevens' is a search for value, is too evenly paced, too lacking in surprise, to bear us up for such a long journey. Mr. de la Mare, as opposed to Mr. Stevens, gets only the most predictable conflicts out of his paradoxes. That is a fault of imagination age cannot improve.

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I shall deal next with that generation of poets now in or approaching their forties. In England, Louis MacNeice and C. Day Lewis along with Auden and Spender have long been accepted as leaders of that generation. Of the first two, Mr. MacNeice seems to me more likely to keep that title. *Springboard* (poems 1941-1944), while revealing hurried composition and supplying essentially nothing new by which to judge his direction, is nevertheless often MacNeice at his most vital, witty and "incurably human" best. In "Alcohol," "The Libertine" and "Nuts in May," MacNeice reverts to his familiar but winning bad-boy pose in which he combines some therapeutic ego-spanking with amusing music-hall tunes and ballads, the net effect being one of a rather hang-overish dejection, not too profoundly felt to add up to much beyond boredom and malaise. "Nuts in May" is the most effective, I think, on the level of irony for its clever opposition of objects from two universes of discourse.

But it is precisely the casual felicity of music and bold speech which is his chief talent which, at the same time, often operates to betray Mr. MacNeice. It is as if a man with a fine voice and the gift of the gab began to depend on his native talents too exclusively without replenishing his imagination or his repertoire at all. This betrayal is often accomplished because, like other raconteurs, Mr. MacNeice prefers surprise endings. (I think the unconscious memory of the closing couplet of the sonnet, and what it can do for toning up a poem, often works to the detriment of much modern poetry, even where the couplet is not explicit.) In "Prayer Before Birth," this device works out well:

*Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.  
Otherwise kill me.*

In "Schizophrenic" and in "Sentries" this usage, because it is too convenient a way to end the poem, results in a weakening of texture, the emotional correlative being sentimentality. This will serve to illustrate:

*But the grey cock crows and she knows why;  
For she must still deny, deny, deny.*

It would be impossible to discuss these poems at any great length without some discussion of Mr. MacNeice's feeling about war. He is one Irishman who was wholly involved in the struggle, and one of his best poems is clearly addressed to his former countrymen. "Neutrality" is a magnificently stated metaphor in which "The neutral island facing the Atlantic" is equated with "The neutral island in the heart of man." It is sustained throughout in three quatrains and ends with the expansion of the metaphor into the physical referents of "neutrality":

*But then look eastward from your heart, there bulks  
A continent, close, dark, as archetypal sin,*

*While to the west off your own shore the mackerel  
Are fat—on the flesh of your kin.*

I am not especially impressed by the political poems in which MacNeice tries to meet what he apparently sees as a responsibility to evaluate the last decade. The imagery in such poems as "The Newsreel" and "Epitaph for Liberal Poets" ("What . . . would we have history say/ Of us who walked in our sleep and died on our Quest") seems perfunctory, perhaps because the emotions it stems from are only "proper" ones. But in poems deriving from war—the death of a friend by drowning, the fires in London, the enemy airmen—where MacNeice feels the immediacy of the emotional and physical threat, there he is at his best. "Trolls's Courtship," a rather effective Freudian oversimplification of the enemy airmen, and "Brother Fire" are among the first-rate ones. The latter, indeed, may well become a classic among war poems, although here as in most current war-poetry, the lash whips inward:

*O delicate walker, babbler, dialectician Fire,  
O enemy and image of ourselves,  
Did we not on those mornings after the All Clear  
When you were looting shops in elemental joy  
And singing as you swarmed up city block and spire,  
Echo your thoughts in ours? "Destroy! Destroy!"*

Cecil Day Lewis in *Short Is The Time* (1936-43), like Mr. MacNeice, seems to feel some sort of moral responsibility for pronouncing on the state of the nation, and that of the universe. Often these discourses are as dull as the song and dance routine of an Elder Statesman at a dinner party. He knows why he has been invited and, with the deadly *noblesse oblige* of his profession, he conscientiously proceeds to bore the other guests. Like MacNeice, and often in language which by now is a kind of coin of the poetic realm of their generation, Mr. Day Lewis gives advice to the poets, the politicians, the enemy, etc. At his worst, as in "The Volunteer," he achieves a kind of 19th century morality, an English righteousness, which is not nearly so convincing nor so innocent as Tennysonian patriotism. In "Newsreel," written in that common idiom which MacNeice, Auden, Spender, their in-group and their out-riders share as freely as a community bath, he conceals his didacticism more effectively with irony and metaphor. But often one gets in Day Lewis a too flagrantly manifested wish to drive his moral home with a sledge-hammer, and too often one feels that the moral is a kind of afterthought (like grace *after* dinner) tacked on at the end of a poem to give it weight and sanction. See "Bombers" in which his familiar monitory ending merely repeats, with no appreciable gain, what should be implicit in the poem itself, or the closing couplet of almost any of the

nine sonnets in his Wordsworthian sonnet sequence, "O Dreams, O Destination." And yet I must qualify my dislike for Mr. Day Lewis' habit of wanting to sum up his poems for the reader. For where this method is integrated with the poem and is necessary to its structure, it is sometimes very effective. The end couplet of "One and One" is a good example of this:

*From any odd corner we may start a vision  
Proving that one and one make One.*

Thus, one recognizes, it is not the "moral" which one resists, but rather the gratuitousness with which it so often rears its homely head at the end of a poem.

Viewing this volume as the record of seven years' performance of a poet who was once thought to be something of an innovator, one is surprised to note the quantitative reliance on the sonnet and other traditional lyric forms, as well as the "poetical" language which one had supposed thoroughly put down by the pioneer reformers of the early years of the century. Thus, there are numerous allusions to man as "living clay," to dreams as "phantoms" and similes comparing humanity to "travellers on a road," etc. Often, one feels that one has read these poems in a great many places where the date marks considerably precede Mr. Day Lewis'. Still, in pieces like "Ode to Fear" and "The Dead," where his feeling is profound and direct, he is able to transcend his habit and to record movingly "This high delirium of nations," to show "our guilt at the root" of it, and, like MacNeice, and, indeed, all the poets, to insist on the individual as well as collective quality of this guilt: "Each man died for the sins of a whole world."

Hugh Macdiarmid, justly described by his publishers as "the stormy petrel of Scottish letters," is a poet to whom the Auden generation owes a good deal, a fact not too often mentioned. It was not only Macdiarmid's socio-didactic mood that they borrowed, but also his telling use of popular balladry both as formal framework and allusive counterpoint against which to play off the insufficiencies of modern society. The poems included here by R. Crombie Saunders (with the author's advice) range from 1925-1939, but I, for one, should in a *Selected Poems* have liked to see the collection brought up to date. A glossary of Scots terms used by Macdiarmid is included, but I have found that for the American reader it is not entirely adequate. I think, too, there is something to be said for a page by page distribution of the gloss.

As one might expect, the early poems derive most clearly from the tradition of Burns and the native ballad. My favorites are "Munestruck," "Empty Vessel," "Love," the remarkable adaptation from the Russian of Alexander Blok put in Scots and in ballad form, and the magnificent ballad of the cheated lover, "O Wha's Been Here Afore Me, Lass?"



which I wish I could quote in toto. The poems from the thirties reflect a more self-conscious attitude toward the subject of Scottish nationalism. The distinctive quality of the Scottish revival is its marked cultural internationalism. Thus, although in "North of the Tweed" Macdiarmid sardonically comments "It's queer/ There's never been a poet here . . .," he gives us in the very same volume a fine English adaptation from the German of Rainer Maria Rilke and in "To Alasdair MacMhaigstir Alasdair" a sprightly and affectionate attempt to evaluate in Scots the achievement of quite diverse emphases in modern poetry: "Puir Rimbaud in his Bateau Ivre/Gaed skitin roon a tub"; "And Melville sailed to jouk the world" "As in his lines Valéry tries/ To keep but their ain life." The useful conclusion he arrives at is that for a poet "A's grist that's there":

*As in yon mighty passage in  
The Bhagavad—Gita where  
A' Nature casts its ooter skin  
And kyths afore us, bare,  
Complicqué, nombreux, . . . et chinois!  
The airmy o the Law!*

The unstudied nature of this internationalism shows up attractively in "The Seamless Garment," certainly as good dialect didactic verse as anything the 18th or 19th century provides in this genre. Thus, in attempting to convince Wullie, the weaver, of the need for more integrated living like "the co-ordination 'tween/ Weaver and machine" both Lenin and Rilke, alike, are endowed with the characteristics of a superb weaver.

In the more recent volumes beginning with *Second Hymn to Lenin* (1933) there is a greater use of English and its resourceful adaptation to the Scots ballad structure. See "One of the Principal Causes of War" (between the sexes!) for its delightful employment. Occasionally, however, one finds a sentimentality which is almost inherent in some of Macdiarmid's subjects: "In the Children's Hospital" and "Lo! A Child Is Born," are subject to this defect. On the other hand, in "Harry Semen" from *The Modern Scot* (1933) there is an original fusion of Scots and traditional English poetic diction which sets up a fine ferment of mood and action—a kind of violent, virile, yet speculative romanticism, which seems very representative of Macdiarmid's temper. It is to be hoped that his work will become more widely known in this country.

Louis Aragon, a novelist with somewhat the same political background as Mr. Macdiarmid's, but, alas, never a stormy petrel when it came to docile zig-zagging of the party line, has now returned to his first love—that of poetry. In all justice, it must be admitted that the political content of his poems is negligible and, apart from a romanticized nationalism, the programmatic elements can be accepted by anyone: freedom, honour, romantic love, nostalgia for the gay and yeasty Paris of

before the War, and so on. I see that M. Aragon's surrealist pals (many of whom now reside in this country) have taken him to task for renouncing his old literary allegiances. I cannot view his secession with alarm. Nevertheless, it is true that Aragon has made a considerable aesthetic turn-about-face from the days of "Red Front." The thirty poems included in the mélange of prose essays by and about Aragon in *Aragon: Poet of the French Resistance* seem very much in the 19th century romantic tradition (not symbolist) of French poetry. It is regrettable that the original French has not been printed along with the English versions. Without them, a just estimate is impossible. The translations by divers hands range from very good (as in almost all of Malcolm Cowley's) to very bad (as in many of Rolfe Humphries'). In many instances the translator's stamp is so strongly upon the poem (as in MacNeice's rendering of "Richard Coeur de Lion") that it is impossible even to guess at the original tone.

There is a spontaneity and a verve about many of these pieces which, although infectious at first glance, often make one wonder just how much one's own latent sentimentality about *la belle France* is thickening the emotion. Or, as Aragon himself writes:

*Who can say where memory begins  
Who can say where the present ends  
Where the past becomes a sentimental ballad  
And sorrow a paper yellowed with age.*

Not to be able to tell is dangerous. There are other confusions, too, in M. Aragon's "organization of the emotions" which are more felicitous and have, at least, the sanctions of history. Thus, in writing of his "love for France" he says:

*Landscape or woman, sleep-charmer, strong as wine,  
Truly I know not which I paint, which love;*

Curiously, M. Aragon's satires are heavy-handed and dull. He is most effective in his poems of love, love raised to an Absolute as seen against the background of war, deprivation, and pain. "Elsa At The Mirror," sensitively translated by George Dillon, is a beautiful love lyric in which "Her dark glass was the world's facsimile/ Her comb, parting the fires of that silken mass,/ Lit up the corners of my memory." The metaphor develops from the particular to the general in such a way that a personal love poem becomes an impassioned and tragic evaluation "of these declining days." This poem alone would justify the collection.

Mr. Cowley has supplied a devoted and thoughtful introduction which, I think, is to be questioned when he asserts that Aragon, unlike other poets of this war, speaks not for himself, but for his country. Even

if it were possible for a poet to do that (and I do not think it is), it should in no way condition one's assessment of the poems.

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Of the post-Auden generation of British poets whose work is here considered, Alex Comfort (author of the novel *The Power-house* published here this winter) is without doubt the most talented and the most accomplished. The symbol or mask a young poet chooses to wear is most significant. Comfort has chosen Lazarus, who rose from the dead and who is "too much at home with the dead/ ever to fear them again. I am too much/ bound to those who have lost the power to speak ever to call my voice my own." This is Lazarus, the Poet-Prophet:

*I have been blind, but I have seen everything  
I have died, I have been raised again  
out of the dead-cart, the corpse-pit of Citizens  
Not by Christ but by Poetry  
and it is I who am speaking to you  
Follow me.*

It is this poem (not his best) which Comfort has chosen as the title poem, but the Lazarus identification crops up in other poems as well.

Although the hatred of war and of authority is everywhere present in the poets of Comfort's generation, Section VI of his "Notes For My Son" is one of the bitterest expressions of it I have seen:

*Remember when you hear them beginning to say Freedom  
Look carefully—see who it is that they want you to butcher.  
...  
Beware. The blood of a child does not smell so bitter  
If you have shed it with a high moral purpose.*

I understand that Comfort is a physician, and it is obvious that he is attracted to the notions of philosophical anarchism. But neither of these factors, although certainly conditional to his poetry, really determine the basic preoccupation with death which runs, a sombre yet beautifully-disciplined *leit-motif*, through all his work. Thus, it is interesting to notice that over a third of his poems are classified as "Elegies," while in the section "A Wreath For The Living" there are at least five which are specifically elegies ("Elegy for a Girl Dead in an Air-Raid," "Elegy on a Hill," "For a Dead Tailor," "*Hoc Est Corpus*," "For Sleeping Now") and all the others, with not one exception, are predominantly elegiac in tone. But it must be made clear that Comfort's almost compulsive awareness of death has no connection with fashionable graveyard mysticism. It is something that is entirely inner, central and necessary to his perception of life. It is the death invading nature, personal relations, and society, coursing through every vein and artery of the living animal, which occupies him. There is no metaphysical attempt at irony or paradox to be wrung from this condition of living, but rather an almost Greek



acceptance which makes for a curiously pure, naked, and deceptively lucid poetic line:

*I believe in winter, in the season of ends.*

*...  
learn from the bony trees, the crystals of death  
light and six-pointed on the swinging seed  
how death-in-living labours in our bones.*

Nevertheless, this recognition of the inevitable term of being does not condone the man-made death which unnecessarily hastens the process. We are all accessories to this crime:

*For nobody falls but we two hear the shot—  
no one is beaten but we see the blood,*

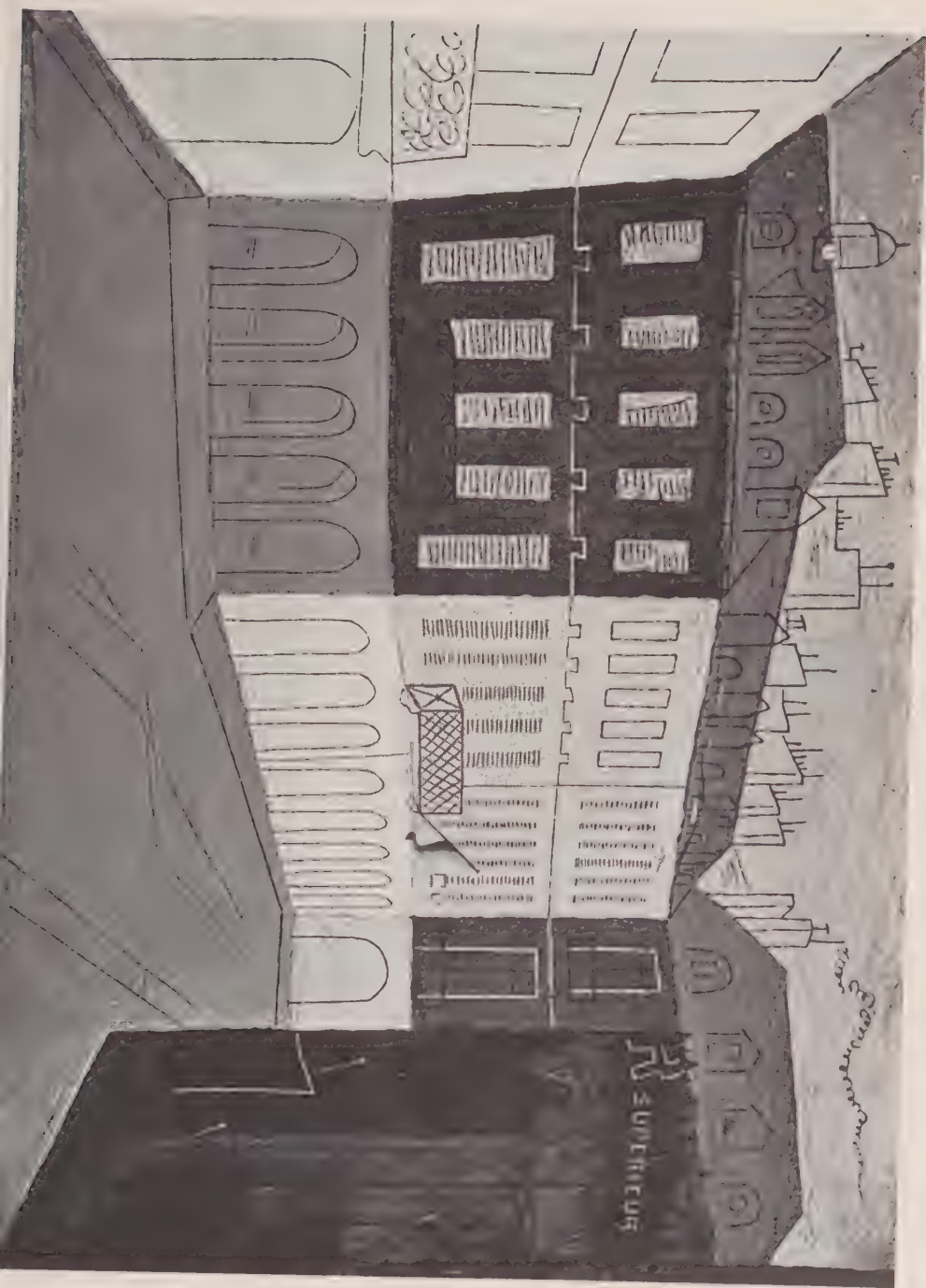
*...  
and the pale hand uncurl in the green water—  
or hear the miner's spine crack two miles down.*

There is an incantatory cadence to these poems reminiscent of Saint-John Perse and the later Eliot. But on the whole, there are less visible "influences" here than is common in a poet still in his twenties. The only serious qualification I should wish to make about the excellence of Mr. Comfort's writing is that Hardy-esque dooming and fatefulness can sometimes verge on a portentousness which, as a sustained poetic atmosphere, can also become a little dull. The wisest thing about the oracles of antiquity was that they recognized the value of speaking infrequently.

Alun Lewis, the Welsh poet who was killed in India at the age of 28, is already in danger of becoming a Brooke-ized myth of World War II. This is not only dangerous but unnecessary. *Ha! Ha! Among The Trumpets*, as its subtitle "Poems in Transit" indicates, was written in war and under the pressures of soldiering. It is quite natural, then, that some of the poems should at times seem not too carefully re-worked and that they are spotty in their distribution of merits. Some are strikingly dramatic appraisals of his war experience: "In Hospital: Poona," "The Raid," "Mid-Night in India," "To Rilke," "Port of Call" are among the best. In them Lewis shows a robust, observant masculinity coupled with a facility of imagery somewhat like MacNeice's. He certainly had the qualities (and this is not intended as derogation) which sometimes make a good poet a popular one:

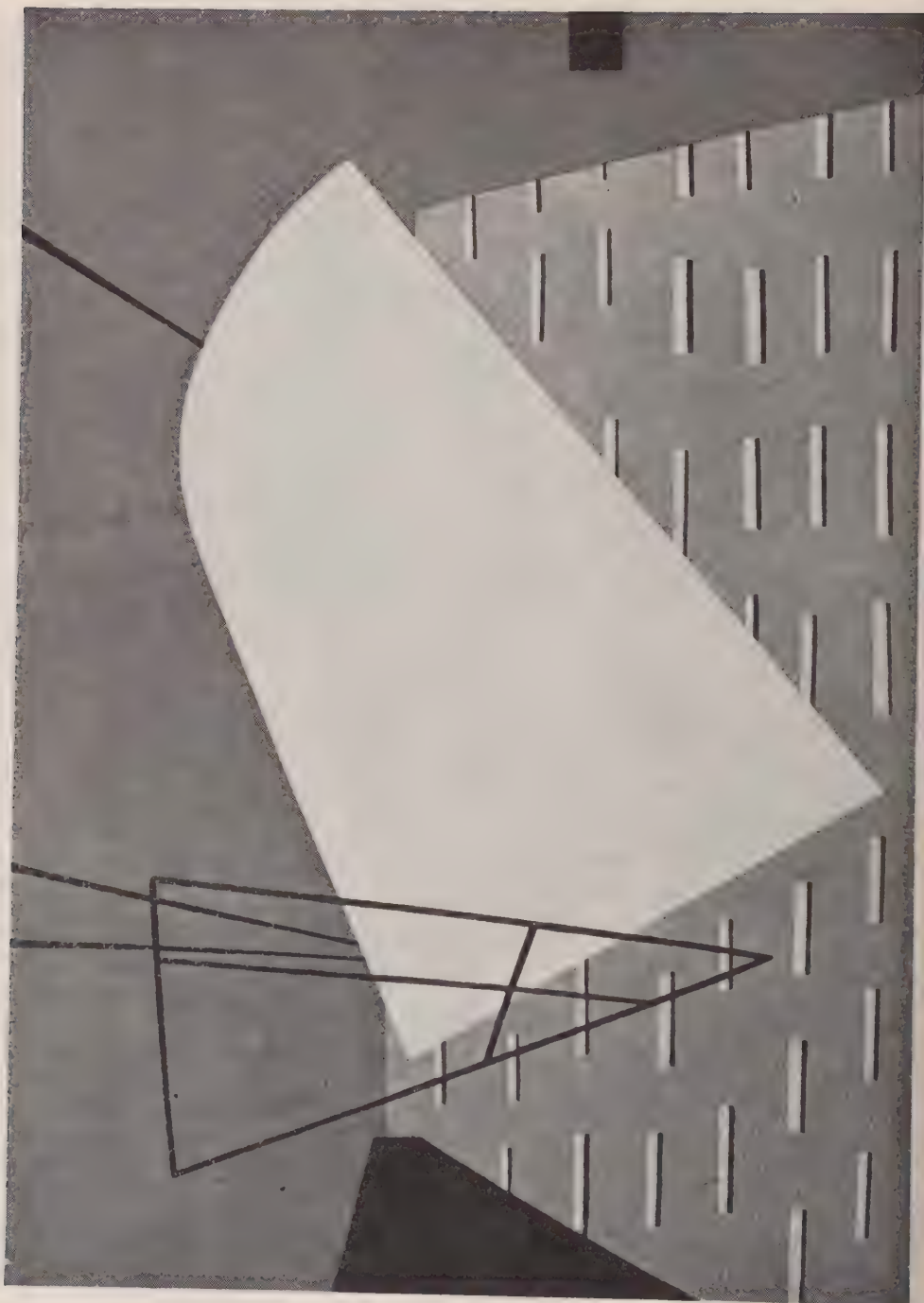
*Oh I have set the earth aflame  
And brought the high dominions down  
And soiled each simple act with shame  
And had no feelings of my own.*

This could be a confessional for airmen everywhere. But, dependent as is this availability to the reader upon traditional language and forms, there exist, along with its advantages, its possibilities for abuse. So that often



PLACE DES VOSGES, #2, oil, 1928

Stuart Davis



AIRCRAFT PLANT oil

Ralston Crawford  
(Courtesy of the Downtown Gallery)



one finds too, *too* Tennysonian echoes in the repetitive devices and the use of refrain which tend to re-enforce what Lewis himself evidently recognized as a fault (under the tutelage of Robert Graves), his tendency toward "moral endings." He did not, moreover, always spot the "moral ending" and cut it, as he seemed to think he had (see his last letter to Graves) and what is worse he often fell into a kind of horrid music-hall sweetness (see the last stanza of "Goodbye"). Nevertheless, these weaker areas of his sensibility might have been disciplined with time and increasing self-knowledge. Certainly, he had the basic warmth and insight coupled with verbal spontaneity which marks the "natural" poet. He had, too, the responsibility toward his time and toward himself which should have proved good omens for growth had he lived:

*And though the state has enemies we know  
The greater enmity within ourselves.*

W. S. Graham, whom I judge to be Scots, is a very different kind of poet from Alun Lewis. His appeal will be for a far more limited group of readers, and even for them he will pose some knotty problems in communication. His small volume *2nd Poems* (thirty-two to be exact) possesses genuine linguistic brilliance. He writes, quite openly, in the tradition of Dylan Thomas, but his essential quality is somewhat unconnected with Thomas' enormously sensuous blend of magic and reality. One example will serve to illustrate the Thomas influence (largely a syntactical one):

*Further through other gables the dead take heed  
Laid out on frames along spring's fingertips  
That anyhow highroad's man's householding height  
The catherine whirligig, the goodnight sky  
Turns with his countrymen slowly about.*

Graham does not depend on myth, folk-lore or religion as heavily as does Thomas, although he shares with him his wide usage of sea-imagery. See the hymn-like ode "Continual Sea and Air" (published in *Briarcliff Quarterly*, number four) about the rescue of "tumbled" airmen. The language is hard, massive and emphasizing the Anglo-Saxon components of English. "The Name Like A River" is about the inexorability of love, and the sea is at once the frame of reference from which the imagery derives as well as antagonist to the poet's "I."

There is a verbal excitement to be gotten from Mr. Graham's poems which is difficult to communicate except by quotation. Much of it, of course, derives from practices now utilized by many poets, but with neither the extensiveness, the intensity, nor the invention displayed by Mr. Graham. Making parts of speech serve unaccustomed functions—adverbs modifying nouns ("the meanwhile word"), compounding nouns

and verbs ("whipdogday"), adverbs used as nouns ("Fashions from ultimately"), adjectives adverbialized ("my jacket's Empire scarletly on the field's crushed chimes"), all these are not precisely new tricks for striking sparks from stale bedfellows. But here these devices are so integrated with Mr. Graham's mode of perception that they become a thoroughly consistent texture of experience being experienced. I cannot think of any poet now writing who is achieving a more stimulating synthesis of "container and the thing contained." Powerful, complex, and adventurous, his poems reward those who are willing to exercise the attentiveness required for their enjoyment.

As if to confound any generalization one might be tempted to make about the "direction" of current poetry, along comes Mr. Sean Jennett, an Irishman, who writes with a tempered simplicity, a transparency of syntax and meaning, which seems to reflect a sincere and disciplined spirit. There is no novelty of sound or imagery, no surprise from linguistic torsion, but instead a calm and ordered *exposition* of the emotions. Over half of his work reflects the war quite overtly in subject-matter. I am not especially moved by the war poems, although it is certainly interesting to observe that Mr. Jennett joins ranks with every poet here considered when he declares: "The mutilation of the body rears/ no architecture for our peaceful days, nor can the broken or the severed arm maintain the state./ Bitterness and despair, corroding the foundations of the mind, will war against us at the end of war/ and in the moment of our gaudy triumph/ ruin our gain."

At his very worst, Mr. Jennett can be awful: "See how he sucks at the dug of my moony breast,/ the full sweet orb of his world fond for his lips." But this sort of thing doesn't happen too often. At his best, as in the short sonnet sequence, and "Five Fingers," "The Wind" (from which he takes his title: "A bone sang how even the living/ wear the cloth of flesh for temporary grace"), "The Island," and "For My Father" (the last a moving elegy, slow and exact: "I see him with his working shoulder/ borne proudly like a tree, and with its power/ his muscles answering to his discipline"), he is controlled, careful and dignified.

John Hewitt is Irish too. In *Compass*, a privately printed pamphlet, containing two long didactic poems, written ten years apart, he has sought to assess Europe, war and art. Although Mr. Hewitt concludes that "Art can but jig according to the tune" and "We must seek back for any clue of worth/ to keep beneath our feet a friendly earth, wherefrom, for all our notions, we derive/ the right to live," I am not sure that he has stated the problem correctly. As Allen Tate wrote recently, it was not "Proust caused the fall of France."

Mr. Donald Cowie in *London*, "a satirical poem" written in heroic couplets grouped in ten line stanzas throughout eight cantos, has achieved

an amusing synthesis of Pope's form and Byron's tone. This is not "elegant" verse, however. Rather, it is brisk, broad and bawdy. It is full of Byronic asides, malicious character sketches and is very observant in a deliberately naive but shrewd way, befitting the "countryman" guise of the hero, Legion, (a poet!) who comes to London to crash to glory. The time is during the robot raids.

Although Mr. Cowie thrusts at familiar types inhabiting the periphery of the arts—"society" artists, timid gentlemen-publishers, etc.—he is at his most ribald best when taking off the lunatic fringe of what has often in the past and still does get "advanced" art its bad name. Canto the Sixth, detailing a party at the home of the "equine" Lady Flouncing, patroness of the arts, is my favorite. This excerpt, one of the milder stanzas, yet catches the tone of the event well enough to point the hilarity:

*"I do think, don't you? that the work of Squirt  
"Contains in essence all we feel for dirt."  
"And, darling, have you ever really thought  
"Of painting what's essential in a wart?"  
"I plan to build a doll's house six feet high  
"To symbolize the dark libido's cry."  
"And speaking of typography italic,  
"You must agree it's too divinely phallic."  
"Of course, the only canvas left by Clanck  
"Is worth all Caneletto, and it's blank."*

London is fun, and should be in New York.

In his poems in *Prose and Verse*, *Cowie and Mountain*, Mr. Cowie does not come off nearly so well, with the possible exception of "The Men of Straw," a political satire. Julian Mountain, apparently a young Australian, is represented in this joint volume by a half dozen poems about which I prefer to remain silent.

I have two volumes by Flexmore Hudson, another Australian, before me. *Indelible Voices*, the title of the earlier one, is unfortunate for it emphasizes precisely the quality of inspirational writing which, I imagine, Mr. Hudson should wish to eliminate from his work. Nevertheless *Indelible Voices*, a long poem in ballad quatrains, is not for the most part easy or sentimental in mood. Viewing the destruction of his universe, "disfigured, schizoid, dead or in peril/ are most of the friends of my youth," and seeing his own survival threatened too, the poet, seeking to rescue some value from the anarchy of belief, arrives at an affirmation of the principle of beauty as man's present hope. By beauty he appears to mean the kind of integrated living which Macdiarmid urged on Wullie. The most successful parts of this somewhat uneven poem are the passages dealing with the observation of Australian terrain: "For me the brumbies frisked in frost/ in heat cicadas dinned;/ the



magpie over the mallee sailed/ sideways down the wind."

In *As Iron Hills*, Mr. Hudson's collected poems, he again shows a fine naturalist's eye for the Australian landscape. He seems to be aware of the good fortune: "In the beauty of this land there are subjects enough / to last a poet a lifetime." The section, "Early Poems," should be omitted from subsequent editions. These poems are slight and conventional not only in form but also in the attitudes they strike about love, beauty, pain, etc.

Whitman appears to be the major influence in Mr. Hudson's writing. He seems to see a role for himself as Australia's interpreter similar to that of Whitman's in America: "Far out on the plain a young bull is blaring his want/ there is no mistaking what he means./ We, too, poets, must blare what we want." If Mr. Hudson can do this job without succumbing to the common Whitmanian vices of looseness, rambling structure, and jejune "philosophizing," it should be very worth doing. He seems now to accept too uncritically Whitman's cataloguing practice, and slovenly line, just as, I feel, he also accepts the sonnet form too willingly.

But Mr. Hudson does not accept his society or his time uncritically. His feeling about war is somewhat comparable to that of Sassoon's; and he uses, often, the latter's device of dramatic monologue for objectifying his views. "Pranged" and "Alan of the Ninth Division" are good of this kind.

The sea has always had its poets, but the present quota is more than usually impressive (at least in quantity). George Bruce is (with the exception of Graham and Jennett) the best of the present spate. He is Scots, a disciple, it would seem, of Hugh Macdiarmid and, when he does not romanticize his materials, a trustworthy observer of the sea and the life connected with it. At his best, he can achieve a careful objectivity of precise description which reminds me a little of William Carlos Williams. "Boys Among Rock Pools" is representative of this vein, its crisp detachment not in the least inhibiting the undercurrent of affection:

*Noting with accurate eye the wash of water.  
They hunt (O Primitives!) for small fish,  
Inches long only, and quicksilver,  
But pink beneath the dorsal fin  
Moving with superb locomotion.*

One gets the impression that many of the poems are tentative and exploratory. But Mr. Bruce would appear to have every chance of doing more uniformly interesting work. I disagree with him when he says that Scotland needs "The Canon of a Giant Art." The less Giant Arts there are, and the more the individual artist tries to work out his own design, the more likely that the Scottish Wine Tower (to borrow Bruce's image) may produce its finest bouquets.

We may as well get back to America by the sea-route: forrest anderson and lee ver duft, both seaman and both somewhat informally identified with surrealism, have chosen to write about the sea as a way of writing about a great many other things. Their pamphlet-sized poems, published by small presses, are very attractively gotten up. Mr. ver duft tends toward rather violent, bawdy and sometimes accurate social and political criticism. His taste runs to lush titles like "mixtures of wax and melancholy" and "noon absently plays tattoos of heartbreak," which, I trust, are meant to be funny. Still, he is often witty and has a gift for parody (see the one on Eliot in "Night III"). On the whole, however, his tone is too carping and irritable to allow satire its sharpest sting. His jazz and montage effects I find not new and rather affected. As for his love poems ("if indeed they are such" as a certain reviewer would say), one should like to substitute for Mr. ver duft's question, "Who is whose cancer?," "Who is whose lover?" It is all very puzzling.

forrest anderson's poems are cummings-ish in typography and language; and he has, on the whole, made use of his source with discretion and good taste. Mr. anderson tends sometimes to rather confused metaphors, but when this fault does not overtake him, he can do some very pleasant things. "lone isle" and "bar" are among his best. The body of his work is too slender to make any useful comments about his achievement just now.

From the Zauberberg Press in Germany comes *The Letter to Sheila Anne and Other Poems* by D. Von R. Drenner, clearly an American and a soldier, and, I should judge, a very young one. The poems are violent anti-poetic explorations of "love," chiefly physical, with a clinical eye for ugliness and decay. The insistence on naturalism, here, as so often elsewhere, is, of course, a romanticism turned inside out. The writing is uneven; there are all sorts of hovering presences visible, chief among them Eliot, Dylan Thomas, and Hopkins. Nevertheless, in spite of the slightly compulsive overtones of this forthright anatomy of "love," the use of language on the whole is disciplined and not offensive. "Love, Seen in the Morning, Remembered" is one of the favorite subjects and happens to be one of the best poems. "The Young Man in Love Who Was Killed in Tunisia" is the most uncompromisingly gory elegy of any I have seen deriving from the war. Unfortunately, its macabre detail is not adequately unified by a consistent texture of emotion.

*Generation of Journey*, another pamphlet, handsomely illustrated by B. Straker James "contains the reactions of an American conscientious objector to life in Civilian Public Service Camps in New Hampshire and Maryland, and to an interval as an attendant at a state colony for the feeble-minded." The products of such sources of experience are not nearly so grim as one might expect, and what is more, not nearly so literal as the description suggests. For Mr. Sloan shows intellectual grasp

in evaluating his materials, and thus, his verse, which is didactic in temper, achieves a kind of adulthood and irony which gives proper distance to his feelings. I suspect that Mr. Sloan admires John Crowe Ransom (see "Beauty and the Beast"), and I am certain he is very much at home with the Old Testament, upon which his imagery draws pretty heavily.

George Byron Reece is a "discovery" of Jesse Stuart. Mr. Reece is a Georgian and a farmer. Mr. Stuart says: "Here is someone speaking for the people of old American tradition." Since this cannot be verified, as those good folk are no longer among us, I shall have to reject Mr. Stuart's claim. In at least one poem, and that a long one, "The Ballad of Bones," Mr. Reece has accomplished a very fine tour-de-force of ballad fashioning with an authentic, semi-religious diction. But on the whole, the ballads are literary in flavor rather than folk-ish. Part II, consisting of the poems other than ballads, shows up by its weakness of language and metaphor, what the ballads manage more successfully to conceal by their musical appeal.

Mr. Paul Engle wrote *American Song*, "a widely popular volume," some years ago. Now he gives us *American Child*. It is to be hoped that sometime not too far distant he will find himself in a position to write *American Adult*. Sixty-four sonnets about a child is a little more than one can take, especially if the child is not one's own. As a matter of fact, these sonnets are remarkably pleasant, accessible, and technically competent. The beginning and end pieces in which Mr. Engle attempts to give a kind of social and mythic validity to his subject "Lucky the living child born in a land/ Bordered by rivers and enormous flow:/ Missouri talking through its throat of sand," and so on in this vein are the worst things in the book. On the whole, the sentimentality inherent in his material is not too often succumbed to by the poet, although there is a kind of Wordsworthian primitivism and cultism about the attributes Mr. Engle affixes to childhood which comes pretty close to it: "She moves about the wide fields shiningly/ Loving the living earth where her feet run,/ Making the whole land meaningful and wise." That is the kind of romantic extensionalism which children often engender in parents. Fortunately, however, parents are not always poets.

For my money, the pleasantest surprise of the season is an unpretentious little book of poems, *Some Natural Things*, by James Laughlin. Mr. Laughlin, as everyone who knows anything about literature agrees, is one of our most able publishers, whose consistently high standards of publication are forging a chapter in the cultural history of this country. Although Mr. Laughlin's poems have appeared now and then in the advance-guard reviews, a coherent picture of his intention was difficult to formulate. Now, in these twenty-odd poems one can discern direction and achievement.



Mr. Laughlin is a peculiarly American poet, but his is not Mr. Engle's kind of Americanism. It is, rather, one which stems from his range of awareness, his derivations, and the essential quality of his speech. William Carlos Williams is the most strongly felt influence and the most happily integrated into the texture of Mr. Laughlin's own style. He has learned much from the lens-like objectivity of observation we have come to connect with Williams, and like him he is very sensitive to the cadences of American speech. It is through this medium (again like Williams) that he manages to offer a quiet evaluation of natural things (including people) in the American scene. What is almost as interesting is that he has taken a hint from Williams' prosody and has made a consistent and very personal usage of the two and three line stanza form (predominantly spondaic in emphasis but with a large iambic content) which, unmarred by much punctuation, runs on in a way peculiarly suggestive of our speech patterns. Although there is no end rime, there is some effective internal rime attractively spaced. The line-length is short (dimeters and trimeters); and this, together with the dramatic manipulation of line breaks, creates a terse, idiomatic punchiness. Playing around with line breaks makes possible, often, the violent dislocation of the caesura so that attention is re-focused and new emphasis (usually a shift in tone) is secured. A delightful bit of social comedy, "Go West Young Man," is illustrative of some of these practices. The poem goes on so much like talk that it is impossible to quote one stanza meaningfully without quoting the whole poem.

Two other American influences, although neither is so profoundly accepted as Williams, are Cummings in the social satire (see "Confidential Report") and Ezra Pound (or more properly Propertius via Ezra Pound) in the love lyrics (see "The Return of Love" and "The Last Poem to Be Written"). This last, incidentally, is a vein for which Mr. Laughlin appears to have special gifts. His love poems have a purity and intensity of feeling nowhere betrayed by sentiment. He does not try to give the specific content of "love" (like Alun Lewis, for example) but rather its carefully stated essence:

*Love you that so long a  
time from me have wan-*

*dered Love most curious  
beast whose form and*

*shape we never see Love  
most destroying and be-*

*loved visitor Love you  
are come again. . . .*

It should be mentioned that Mr. Laughlin leaves a page headed "War Poems" blank, noting that it "stands for a group of bitter, satiric, war-hating poems which I wrote in '42 . . . but there seems to be no point in printing them now and hurting people who have lost a son or a leg." I disagree with Mr. Laughlin. There are hurts and hurts. Perhaps he can be persuaded to reconsider.

\* \* \*

It is becoming a kind of current drawing-room (or *atelier*) mood to sniff at "war poetry," and while it is true that much shoddy has been sold as "poetry" by merely attaching "war" to it, it is frivolous to pretend that war, as the central fact of our time, has not affected the poets. The fact of the matter is that they *have* responded to it, whether some critics like it or not, and although we are justly bored with "official" war literature, the happy thing is that the poets have responded as individuals, with great integrity and entirely on their own terms. But common to all is a deep and passionate hatred of what war does and undoes.

It was after World War I that Paul Valéry wrote "One can say that all the fundamentals of our world have been affected by the war. But among all these injured things is the *Mind*." Now, after World War II, one can say it again, and again. And the poets are doing just that.

William Mead

## I NUNC SUPERBE

O mind who in this journey through yourself  
followed the accurate path from sleep to light  
powerful and solemn came and went alike  
secure in the supremacy you felt  
now you have seen the static universe  
split into photos you have given ear  
to talkative sunsets and high in the air  
strangled the minor fables of the earth.  
Conqueror of mythic beasts among its bones  
the living head of Hydra cannot change  
your perfect victory. So forget. Be bold;  
inscribe the tablets with the deed and say:  
Now I like Herakles have set these stones  
marking the certain limits of the world.

## Norman Macleod

### SELECTIONS FROM "A MAN IN MIDPASSAGE"

#### A Man In Midpassage

Is that life over  
Who had covered and assuaged its central grief?  
The cadres in cruel conflict  
Bend the hot hallway of belief.

Out of what window should memory look:  
The book in the brazier, the intricate typewriter  
The epitaph's instinct: which one select,  
A man in the murdered frame, perhaps,  
Locked in his caricature like a convict  
Or strict conscience of that good  
Incompletely created by any  
If not blood beaten into his earth,  
Tombstone tilted against evil  
West of childhood, hate.

Would he walk as upright man  
Once could, while adamant animals  
Moved flat on the landscape  
Like light over the railheads  
Converge in developing thunder;

Take office, make public meaning  
His poems contracted  
Between airshafts

Who had first felt tamarack  
Sharpen his taste  
And future's handshake.

#### Admission Record

A skull waiting in the anteroom  
Takes on the abstract character, the past  
Pressed like gravel against the globe  
Containing nerve and net,  
The fisherman's accident  
Hold memory to its wavering line



Over the dark subconscious sea  
Separates him from he.

Outside the one reasonable window  
Organized the eye,  
The green blaze of landscape's architecture  
Sets over against recession of his mind  
Grey ebb and flow under the wave's spinal column  
Tortured in anonymity and test  
No regimen will engrave upon  
Futurity and hoodlums have it.

There is no carriage  
For that skull:  
The body of  
This hospital is full.

### The Rock, The Man, And The Mountain

The rock my heel edged from the mountain's flank  
Rose slowly like a white spring from the earth,  
Fell forward into silence, sank, and ripped its red way  
From bank to stone gulley, boulder and creek,  
Caroming with increased violence cheek to cheek

And I felt misfortune run blue in my breath,  
Find outlet and tangible outline in front of my face  
And fall—even as its original object went  
From heaven, from place, and whose arrested descent  
I had disturbed and nevertheless continued  
Roughly, just as the mountain's meaning shifted  
Because of accident and axis of my presence  
Whose world revolved within an arbitrary range,  
Knew the estranged sun and, yet, remained  
Open as I was, still with blame, and moving  
Strangely directed and stubbornly forward  
In balanced strength, on lean excited lung,  
Heart completely and my mind unstrung—

Until that rock strike solid into earth  
Disintegrating the fine grave of its valley  
And I take up once more from where I left,  
Seeking my own deflected change and death.

## The Dark Descent

The mind is like a mirror, a miracle whose light  
Can drown within the image that blackens out my sight  
Or stops beyond the eardrum to beat its murder in  
Or drives along the fingers taking the tactual to  
The terror that determines what we are and do.

Wherever the nostril nudges or mists upon the bright  
Surface above the handle that held us once upright,  
The taste and all our torture, the touch that brings us through  
The single thought distorts us and blurs  
Our will and good,

O let it all be equal  
To what I might have been  
Before the mind accepted the dark descent within.

(Reprinted from the *New Republic*)

## Another Poem For Ray

Who laughed to see his future  
In the unknown lineaments of war,  
Took his skylark wings  
And shook the mountain  
With its turquoise fingers.

## Jean Wahl

### NASCITUR AMOR FATI

#### Face Of Destiny

My destiny, I see your face,  
Turning away from all beings,  
Better to feel the being of all.

You carry no message,  
But simply the cry of a soul at bay  
Refusing all help.

## Gordon Symes

### PARENTHOOD

A lance-corporal and his wife stood in a glass-roofed bus-shelter, in a small market-town. The late summer sun was failing, and the sky directly over the glass roof was stained the colour of blackberry juice. The shelter was noisy with the broad chatter of women, holding enormous, mostly empty baskets. They were going home from their stalls in the market. But the soldier and his wife didn't notice the others much. They were talking about having a baby.

They had come near to a quarrel that very morning, before going to the town to look around the market and shop, and to go to the pictures in the afternoon. It was the second day of the corporal's leave. Sitting up in bed, his wife had said suddenly: "Wouldn't it be lovely now to have a little'un, Joe?" They had been married about a year.

The question had startled Joe a little. He opposed it almost automatically. He was opposing it now, red in the face, and slightly surly. His wife, May, was patient and good-humoured.

"We dunna want a babby yet," he was saying. "Not while there's a bloomin' war on, anyway. It's too chancey by a long sight. You never know what's goin' t'happen these days. Now do you? I mighten be here. You dunna want that surely now? There's plenty o' time when we've settled down after."

"But I'd like t'have it now, Joe," the woman said patiently. "If you are goin' away, that's all more reason t'have summat to put me mind to while you're gone. Summat to show for when you come back."

"Ar, there'll be plenty for you to put your mind to," Joe grunted.

"It's only natural a married woman should want a little 'un, Joe," she went on, as if he'd not spoken. "Don't you think we've waited long enough now?" Joe didn't say anything.

"Wouldn't you like it as well?" she asked him, looking steadfastly at him.

Joe's red face was puckered up like a sulky child's. "T'ain't right t'have kids in war-time, if you ask me," he said at last. "It's easy for the papers to talk. It don't give the kid no chance. Nor you neither."

"Your mum 'ud like to see a little 'un about the house," she said very softly.

She knew, in a wife's way, that he was only resisting her because he had resisted her in the morning, and was too stubborn to give in now. A man should make up his mind and then stick to it. That was Joe. But he never really made up his mind about anything. He just argued, one way or the other, and then sulked silently, when he wanted her to know that he was letting her have her own way. She knew Joe.



"You'd like it really, Joe," she said, still gentle. "You're only thinking about me. But I'd like a kiddy, honest, Joe. More'n anything I would. It's only natural."

Joe lighted a cigarette. He suddenly looked up at the Market-Hall clock. He could barely read the face of it for the darkening purple-fringed clouds blown round it. "I reckon that bus has gone," he said glumly. "Or else it don't run on Wednesdays no more. That'll mean waitin' for the last bus 'ome."

May said suddenly: "Let's not wait for a bus, Joe. Let's walk. It's a nice night, and we'll do it under the hour, easy. Come on, Joe." She gave his arm a little tug.

"That's all very well," he said. "It may be a change for you. I'm on leave. I get enough footsloggin'." But his scowl was only a sham, she knew, and he moved off at the same time with her, out of the shelter.

They passed over the old, low bridge at the end of the town and stopped for a moment to look down at the water. In the middle where it was stillest and clearest, there were vivid lakes reflecting the sunset, like wine-coloured jelly before it has properly set. Joe, looking at his wife, was amazed to see that her face had a soft, almost secret look of content, and her eyes shone like stars. "God, women are queer," he thought to himself. "It's funny what a baby can do to them. Now it don't work like that with me at all." He felt a moment's jealousy. But, for all that, he often remembered those minutes on the bridge, in the queer hush of the twilight, watching the still wine-jelly pools; with the sweet faint odour of lime-trees brushing their nostrils, and his wife's eyes like stars.

They didn't talk much on the way home. Only, just as they left the bridge, May said, "It's best to have a little 'un when you really want it yourself. Not when you feel you've got t'have it, else it'll be too late." And, after that, there didn't seem anything more for him to say.

They walked home arm-in-arm, along the main road which climbed up into Wales. It was nearly deserted now. Above them, the last dark red fires burned out in the blackening sky, like embers in a cold grate.

They came at last to the house of Joe's parents, where his wife was living now. It lay off the road, a white shape in the growing darkness. If you had seen it in daylight, you would have thought it forlorn. It was fenced from the road by a greenish lichened wall, with a five-barred gate, fastened with twine. The tall white-washed building was as bald as a workhouse. It had an outcrop of smaller buildings, which ended in a ramshackle Dutch barn, and, outside the barn, the tyreless body of an old-fashioned Ford car, brown and flaky with rust. There would be an old, yellow sheepdog, snoring or scratching for fleas, and hens like bundles of bright rags in the grass which grew, longish and

discoloured, between the road and the house. On the other side of the house, opposite the barn, there were a few stumpy damson trees, and, under them, a couple of blistered old bee-hives that weren't used any more. The place was like hundreds of other derelict small farms all over the country. But, to Joe, it meant the place he came to on leave, where his mother and his wife made a bit of a fuss of him, and he had the meals he liked. And May thought of the pram in the sunny grass, with the old collie for company.

Joe walked with a solemn lurch from one side to the other, a bit bow-legged, and, with his peeled ruddy face, looked like a ploughman. But, as a matter of fact, he hadn't stayed on the little holding. It had been a disappointment to the old man, but he'd got over it, especially as his other boy had stayed, until they called him up a month or two before. Joe had driven a lorry for a haulage contractor, lugging beet from the farms all round, or fetching sand and gravel from the pits. There had been plenty of work for the new aerodromes that were springing up, until he had his papers. His wife had been in service at the Rectory.

There was supper on the table when they got in. Tinned salmon with potatoes, and thick parsley sauce, and a big plum and apple pie, with the top off the milk, and cheese with his mother's chutney to round it off. Joe ate hungrily and speechlessly. But, meeting suddenly his wife's eye, still warm and hopeful, he remembered their talk, and his face grew even redder. He felt bashful all at once. He was ashamed to look his mother in the face. When his wife talked about going to bed, he grew sheepish, and wouldn't look up, rubbing his fork doggedly with a bit of bread. It was just as though it was their first night together.

As, in a way, it was.

This leave went as quickly as leaves do. He remembered that, when they parted, May clung to him with more affection than she'd ever shown before. The memory of it went with him on the train, as he began the long journey back.

The train was crowded as usual with service men and their kit. After a time, Joe began listening to the two men opposite. They were smart, towny fellows, by the sound of their voices. Something they were saying caught his attention sharply.

"My missis had a nasty shock the other week," one said with a sort of chuckle. "It put the breeze up her properly. You know what women are. It shook me, too. It's all right, now, mind you. I took her over to see a friend of mine, and got it put right. But it shook me. You know what I mean."

"God's truth," the other said. "You can't be too bloody careful, can you? My missis would go off her nut."

"So would I. Damn that for a game. Going home on leave, and finding the missis up the pole. That's too much of a good thing."

"Too bloody true," the other said. "Christ, what's the *use* of a bloody leave?" he laughed. "That's as bad as going home at the wrong bloody time." The other laughed as well. "Makes you think a bit, don't it? What a life, eh?"

It made Joe think a bit, too. He felt uneasy. He thought: it's right what they say, these blokes, when you come to think about it. Hell, he wondered, I don't know what I've started. For some reason, he remembered an afternoon at Llanrhaiadr when he was a youth. He'd pushed a boulder over the edge of a spur, and then been scared to sickness as it gathered speed and leaped like a mad thing, uncontrollable, into the misty valley underneath. It had spoilt his day, wondering if there'd been anyone in the valley. He felt a little sick now, thinking: I don't know what I've started. I ought to have thought what I was doing. I'll be on leave again in three or four months' time, and God knows what I'll be going home to. And I've had such a good time this week and all. Everything had been perfect. He remembered May's happiness, and the new warmth of her lovingness. He didn't think what it was that had made her happy. He only thought of what he might be missing next time.

Joe began to hate the thought of what he might be missing. As the train pulled him farther and farther away from the country peace of his leave, he slipped back gradually into his Army way of thinking. He had a stripe. He worked hard for it, and sometimes felt bitterly that he deserved a second. He'd mastered Army ways. Look after yourself, they told him from the beginning; no-one else will. It's you or the other fellow. The soldier's watchword—Muck *you*, I'm all right. What the officers called initiative.

The Army had taught Joe a thing or two. That was why there'd been no baby for the first year. They'd been married after Joe had done six months in the Army; an old sweat, drawing his proficiency pay. May had been a bit shocked, at first, at some of his ideas. Especially as she used to work at the Rectory. But, of course, Joe had reason on his side. Everything was unsettled. They hadn't even a home of their own; May had gone to live with his parents, and help his mother. "You dunna want to land a little 'un on them straight away," he'd argued. "Tain't fair on the old folks." This had, perhaps, been his strongest argument.

Joe had been back about a month, when he had a letter from his wife. It was written in pencil, as usual. Pens and ink weren't easily come by in the old house. Joe thought it seemed damp and smudged in places when he opened it.



"I'm sorry, Joe, we're out of luck this time," May had written. "There's nothing doing, I'm afraid." There wasn't much else in the letter. Just "nothing doing this time."

Joe's first feeling was relief. He'd just got in, tired to the bone, off a thirty-mile route march, and felt he couldn't face up to anything that needed much thought. Thank God for that, anyway, he thought drowsily, lying on his bed, smoking lavishly, with his bare washed feet up on the head-rail. Suddenly he looked forward to his next leave, as ravenously as he'd looked forward to a meal all the last five miles of the march. Something to get his teeth into.

Then he noticed again the damp smudges. May's disappointed, he thought quickly. Poor old girl. She *was* looking forward to it. What a shame. He didn't like to think of her being upset. He felt guilty about his first relief. Never mind, he thought, consoling her in his mind, we can try again next time. It's not too late, old girl. Not everybody clicks first time.

It was also a consolation to him. Remembering the pleasure of his last leave, and May's new warmth, he felt no longer guilty. It's just as well, maybe, he thought. He looked forward eagerly to the next time. His mind stirring him, he lighted another cigarette from the end of the old one. He always allowed himself more after a route march. That was because, on the march, you only had time for half a smoke every hour.

The next week, his whole unit was warned for draft overseas. The secret had been well-kept, and came as a shock to everybody. It was a rushed job, too. There was only time for forty-eight hours' leave; and so those who lived more than ninety miles away weren't allowed to go home. This put Joe right out of the running. The little farm was nearly 150 miles away.

The men who couldn't get home were given a pass to the nearest big town. Joe went there, too. He felt strange and stupid. All the other men started drinking straight away, bravely resolved to booze themselves unconscious. Joe tried a pint, but it wouldn't go down at all. He wandered off round the town on his own.

He could think of nothing but his wife. He kept remembering her eyes like stars, and her affection when he'd stopped arguing about the baby. The newly-found intimacy of their last leave. It seemed to him then that he wanted the baby as much as ever she did, not only for her sake. It seemed the one thing for which he'd been living and working all the time, the thing most wanted in his life. Without it, life seemed a dreary waste.

He saw, in front of him, long barren years of soldiering under a far hot sun. (He never thought of dying out there.) He saw his wife growing older at home, losing her looks, and her power to bear a child.

For neither of them, it seemed to him, were young any more. They'd been courting for nearly five years, in the country fashion, before they married.

He thought of her loneliness, waiting for him with less and less hope, slowly losing her interest in his return. He pictured his own return. There would be no happiness, only the certainty that they had both lost forever the best years. He thought of his old age, childless. It's not like the town, he thought. People always look down on you more in the country if you've got no kids.

The sudden memory of that damp smudged letter of last week hit him like a punch under the heart. He felt daft with frenzy. He found himself on the main railway station, with a platform ticket. His blood ran like fire. He was ready for anything—desertion, red-hot bloody mutiny.

But the station was slowly filling with Redcaps, called out for such an emergency. They walked up and down in twos, watching every barrier. Big smart men, unlike soldiers, having none of the feelings of soldiers. One or two civilians, women mostly, muttered and sneered at them, as they stepped up and down, stiff and regimental because they felt self-conscious.

The sight of them slowly froze Joe. He sat on a bench in the darkness, and felt his frenzy going. He couldn't risk losing his stripe now. He'd worked so hard for it, and still had hopes of another. That was something he had to hold on to. For his wife and—for his wife's sake.

The big trains kept coming in and out. But it seemed like the end of the world to him.

Paul Eluard

(From) FRESCO

The thicket where the beast is true  
The battle where the beast is false

The country where the earth is lovely  
The cavern where the earth is ugly

The land where happiness wins out  
The desert where death has command

The night to which man submits  
The night in which man frees himself

The night in which man is the light.

—Translated by WILLIAM MEAD

## Ginny Hill

### THREE POEMS

#### Still Life

Incense hung around the sense  
To close eye's day in worship,  
Tapers about the way  
Of a kneeling mind.

God, the past tense, too immense  
To stay confined in lordship  
Capers wryly in play  
Behind the bended blind.

#### In Heart's Twisted Earth

In heart's twisted earth  
Must voices burn that cry the night  
To those that wish to listen.

Sound in the roaring surf  
That beats shore in moonlight  
Under the mist that glistens.

They speak of a child's birth  
The sightless eyes  
In the quiet that imprisons.

Nowhere on this earth  
Are there men born  
With ears to listen.

#### Drought

The land talked to itself of rain  
While earth and sky  
Like a great oven  
Closed their doors in silence.

Howard Nemerov

## IN THE GLASS OF FASHION

I am asked why I do not  
Stop writing about death  
And do something worthwhile.  
To write about what would be  
Not to write about death?

One might hypothecate an  
Invasion of El Morocco by  
Armed insurgents, probably  
Mongol; and describe the  
Limited musculature of the  
Human face, where terror  
Would continue to smile:  
Is this funny enough?

In the same way, one  
Goes on dealing in a set  
Of manners that does not  
Perhaps apply to the local  
Situation: with verity  
Chilled to the page: but  
There is no help for this.

The virtuous express their  
Virtue by laughing at the  
Distant catastrophe: when  
Shanhaikuan was taken there  
Were enough people at dinner  
Who found it amusing, since  
"Whenever one laughs, a man  
"Is dying": admitted, and yet  
Their open faces have the look  
Of faces paralyzed during the  
Performance of an indecent act.

Which is to say: the laugh  
That was appropriate for Spain  
Will do for Shanhaikuan  
If one is able to repeat the  
Precise equivocations of the mask.



But the verities, I say again,  
Continue to repeat themselves in  
Exactly the same manner; and the  
Resemblance to death is inescapable.

Jean Garrigue

## WHERE THEY ARE LEAST SUSPECTED, ANGELS HIDE

Asunder from, by jealous wits and strays,  
And monstereed by anxiety past fears,  
I hear the terrier yipping in his tent  
And count the busses coming from the piers.

New England Christs might comfort midnight quays  
The thin-walled poor find conscience in a snow  
But armies of remorse lead drunk captains  
Past gaudy trumpets that mislead no foe.

I hear the muddy steps trail up the hall.  
The schoolchild voice is frivoled miles away  
And venal storage, wasteful doubts will not  
Anneal the bouts of this misshapen day.

Now you who talk to all your selves all night  
And you who listen to the night past thought,  
Summon a drab child or a mountain in  
To loose the world from wrath a captain wrought.

Interrogate the snow with red raiment  
And in the westfall of your land decline to rout.  
The only worthy power is courage  
To test and plumb the cupboards of the rat.

And with fine laughter liberate the fox,  
Unleash the bear who's massive from his chain,  
No other stewards of your hope than this!  
Resist the failure and suspect the gain.

Nor then enormous on the streets resume  
The dervish howl of demons set agog  
Or then resounding and enormous in your head  
Your heart that sounds just like that prisoned dog.

Parker Tyler

## THE ESTHETICS OF MODERN AMERICAN DANCE

One of the worst forms of cultural sentimentality is the championing of something because it is national. In the dance, as in all art forms, international currents today are rife, and in America, of all places, foreign dance has been welcomed and duly infiltrated American expressions. In itself, "dance" is a very loose term, but specifically applied to the most "serious" modern American dance, the school of Martha Graham, the looseness of the term—and what it implies in derivation from sources other than American folk—is well justified.

That Miss Graham herself was much "influenced" should not distract attention from the fact that she is an original formulator, insofar as what she expresses, in spiritual substance, is wide and deep in modern (especially American) character. That Miss Graham has for springs of inspiration both the interpretive dance of Isadora Duncan and the plastic gymnastics of the German expressionist school of Mary Wigman is a fact more pertinent to modern expression than the systematic and parrot-like importations of Ruth St. Denis or the less impressive formulations of Miss Graham's modern companions, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman.

In the modern sense, the element of originality becomes more ambiguous than ever before. Isadora Duncan was assuredly an "original." But in a time when all society was busy adapting the past, and every refined cultural manifestation, from poetry to women's fashions, was shopping around in the centuries for formal as well as contentual motifs, originality consisted largely in the energy and innate artistic genius of the unique performer. In one sense, a shift occurred from originality to inventiveness. Isadora Duncan was an American genius who quite unexpectedly took up an aspect of the classic cultural heritage unexploited by neo-Platonists. With her unique personal means, she broke up the formal tradition in the European (Italian) ballet and inspired the Russians to create the ballet in its modern form: the highest expression of contemporary dance (rivalled only by Spanish dance).

It is a typical modern comment (not without reasonableness) that the Russian ballet, even with its modification by Anthony Tudor, does not express the modern spirit, and above all does not express America. Aside from orientating what must be largely, today, so vague and abstract, the Modern Spirit, we have to concede that in the war years, it is the American élite class that has supported this ballet, just as the same class supports the opera. Classical ballet must express something just as definite as Graham, or neither could exist professionally.

Any art expresses the esthetic preoccupations of its supporters, whether these number ten or ten thousand. Yet here it is not so much my purpose to identify the distinct classes or groups supporting each dance form under consideration as it is to distinguish the orientation of content and style belonging to each, and to explain their historic cultural origin. As a matter of fact, the serious dance (that intended for stage spectacle other than musical comedy) is really, these days, surprisingly integral. Its two chief forms, however, approach their common cultural content from esthetically opposite directions. Miss Graham's style of dance spectacle has a type of plot (whose borrowing from poetry and drama is significant) wholly different from classical ballet in that it starts out by assuming an unconscious element lies in the dance idea. In this way, Miss Graham's style is more purely surrealist than either the early modernistic experiments of the Russian Ballet in Paris or even ballets originated in America based on ideas by Dali.

Let me cite an instance without delay: Miss Graham's "Appalachian Spring." Like such ballets of Tudor's as "Pillar of Fire" and "Dim Lustre," an inside and an outside are supposed to exist simultaneously with respect to the visual ideas achieved by the dancer; that is to say, the performer expresses things which his dance character does not fully realize he is expressing as well as things he does fully realize he is expressing. All the Graham characters, while they dance in each other's presence or with each other, seldom fully recognize one another. Invisible walls and "tangible" mental preoccupations alike seem subtly to separate them. Such a dance, very inner in significance, is expressed far less in purely external forms than, for instance, the also "inner" dance of Isadora Duncan. Her dance expressed emotions without respect for the formal tradition of serious dance, but in another sense she was conventionally formal, because obviously she was well aware of what she was doing, explicit, and wide-awake; she was consciously producing an objective spectacle of a very recognizable kind: she was expressing the life urge (inseparable from which, evidently, was sexual joy) for an audience that was definitely on the other side of the footlights, and was not, as do the characters in Tudor's "Dim Lustre" and Graham's "Deaths and Entrances," performing for a previous or other self as well as for others. Just because the Graham dance seems primarily designed for a self-of-the-dancer as its spectator, it seems exhibitionistic, as neurotic traits often are.

Naturally, the custodians of classical ballet were receptive to Isadora's spiritual innovation because it widened the scope of the serious dance by revealing anew (if only through a soloist) its fundamental nature: the ritual expression of the twin sentiments of romantic love and chivalry. These are the two eyes through which the classical ballet sees itself—and quite naturally, because its social origin is the ritual of

the royal court. Classical ballet is the artistically objectified love-play of aristocrats. If we analyze the so-called "positions" of classical ballet and then follow them to their most difficult modern expression, as in the choreography of Balanchine and Massine, we follow a completely visual logic of the gestures of knightly wooing and princessly surrender, of aristocratic valor, wrath, pride, and exultation (to which, incidentally, slaves aspire). In this century, these aristocratic "plots" of the emotions were revised, modified, but they have not lost their objectivity as poetical—metaphoric or fantastic—forms. Even modern fantasies such as "La Chatte," "Ode," "Le Train Bleu," and others, are evidently metaphoric projections in the "fairy-tale" or magical sense. The high type of human grace and dignity, the high essence of the poetry of easeful and willed human movements, which compose the essential plot of ballet, remained. One ballet, "Errante," introduced a "neurotic" element that anticipated the programmatic inventions of Anthony Tudor. But the choreographic genius of Balanchine and the purity of Tchelitchew's poetic idea here combined to objectify the play of neurotically inflected emotions and so excluded the element of psychological confusion that contributes to certain ballets of Tudor's and to the dance spectacles of Martha Graham.

It is not of fundamental interest whether Graham influenced Tudor, or vice versa; probably it has been vice versa with both. The point is that Tudor took the given classical-romantic style and modified it to suit his choreographic aims; thus, he tried to carry forward the basic plot of ballet to fit into the sexual dramas of modern life. The expressive means of dance remain, with Tudor, strictly classic, even if he has adulterated it manneristically and inflected it toward pantomime. In simple substance, he has attempted to create a new "Scheherazade" (the love contest) and so doing, has maintained while modifying the original Tournaments of Love in medieval times that royal courts finally fused with the court dance to create the "modern," or 19th century, notion of ballet. For what is the modern ballet, in its deepest pattern, but the old love-pursuit and love-duel—the ancient romance between male and female and rivalry between males?

Modernity has brought into the sexual ritual considerable complexity in the element of neuroticism: doubt and bewilderment as to basic desires and objects of desire, resulting in special physical symptoms. Now we are face to face with the dance inventions of Miss Graham, whose esthetic is the formalized physical symptomata of the neurotic. It is in her rejection of the fundamental style or style-plot of ballet, rather than in her mere abandonment of classic-romantic repertory, that Miss Graham has basically broken with ballet tradition. If she liked, she could rewrite "Swan Lake" and make it quite identifiable; still, her version would differ from the original more than "Swan Lake" now differs from ballets such as "Giselle" or "Le Beau Danube." She



would simply give us a Puritan prince and a Puritan swan-princess. This is solely because the dance character in Graham spectacles is a sort of impersonated poet—a creator of his own personality through art: a fact which explains why Miss Graham has used the Bronte sisters and Emily Dickinson for her heroines, why she has mixed dance with the words of poetry, and thus why her dance contains the two dimensions of inside and outside. As the creator of personality, the self is always a sort of artist; if he is a puzzled, hesitant artist, he creates a double, often vague, dimension in reality.

It is not that Miss Graham depicts schizophrenic personalities in her spectacles, but that her dance style is schizophrenic. Making a judgment of her artistic achievement is painful when one considers that modern-dance enthusiasts have taken her up violently, partly as a sort of patriotic dark horse running against the Russian Ballet and partly because her theatre obviously reflects to an important degree the theatre of the modern psyche. What, precisely, has she done for this “theatre,” and how has she done it?

Undoubtedly, the rhythmic sense of motion in Miss Graham’s dance, its freedom and violence of movement as physical exertion, objectify the latent sense of rhythmic and motor capacities in the audience. Now classical ballet, in being, as an extension of court ritual, an anachronism, is artificial today. But it is “artificial” only as basic “art” is; that is, it is a formal contrivance expressing a sense of objective behavior, however socially outdated such behavior is. If modern beings cling to romantic conceptions of love, if they have a sense of the dynamic drama of the gestures of sexual wooing and surrender, they are bound to admire the ballet, for it is the purest existent repository of these conceptions of love. Tudor is a “realist” or “naturalist” in exactly the sense that Isadora Duncan was, although not in the same manner. He accepts the given romantic gestures of love and tries to express as well the modern psychological complexities of love. One must say that on the whole he has failed, but since his anchor is classic form, he has failed more gracefully than Martha Graham, whose change in the manners of romantic dance derives from a vulgarly understood Freudian attitude toward love. Miss Graham has not merely reflected the shift in social ideas of love and the way they work, *she has made an independent judgment of the traditionally noble gestures of love*. She started by assuming in sexual ritual (both private and public) an *ignobility* of the compulsive, the clumsy, and the somnambulistic—not primarily in a comic sense (although “Every Soul Is a Circus” essays the satiric), but in the sense of pathological violence. It is all very hobbledohoy, kittenish, chesty and leg-stretching.

Largely visible in Miss Graham’s style is an element that may be termed the “embarrassing reflex”—a sort of involuntary action that, once aware of having made it, one seeks to cover up, or a sort of action one

commits automatically in shame, anger, or perverse desire, only before one's intimates or oneself. In a subtle sense, Miss Graham exhibits this "embarrassing reflex" (symptomatic of the most inward emotions) in the style of public ritual. "Appalachian Spring" and "Deaths and Entrances" are excellent examples of what may be called Miss Graham's fusion of the private and the public dance. The *private dance* is partly for the sight of oneself and partly what one can't help showing others. The *public dance* is what one can't help showing others and what is deliberately meant for the sight of others.

Dance is a mental image of objective grace as well as the glorification and formalization of the desire to please with the physical being. Bodily pride (the human version of animal integrity) is its cornerstone. Miss Graham incarnates this cornerstone by suggesting that the body, even if organically versatile and forceful, is capable of involuntary awkwardness and the wincing style of physical shame. Classical ballet is based on the extreme possibilities of dynamic and appropriate posture attainable by the human organism. Graham's dance is based on the realization of these same dynamic possibilities in the moral harness of epilepsy—an esthetic means at once inhibitive and compulsive, and susceptible of the *inappropriate*. Here we see the precise role of the Pioneer Woman in Miss Graham's dance—a role that is purely symbolic. The "Pioneer Woman" is the defiant pride of the body aware of some cause of shame, aware of some incapacity of "dance" grace, and seeking to circumvent or slur it. That is why Miss Graham's style has what I may term *choreographic circumvention*: a sudden, meaningless perambulation, an involuntary lapse of calculated and equilibrated motion. So her dance gets its hurry-scurry. Such a spectacle as "Deaths and Entrances" suggests that the crippling sense of shame has its definite origin in sexual frustration. Hence the "tragedy" in Miss Graham's style is professional mourning over the corpse of the classic-romantic style, whose main content is absolute, unimpaired sexual pride. If Miss Graham may be said to succeed in expressing a kind of sexual pride, it is still an impure, handicapped kind; underprivileged as it is, I would say it expresses rather an anti-sexual pride, a moral deliverance from sex.

Miss Graham's dance spectacle directly reflects the lack of form in her personal style. "Appalachian Spring," for instance, has no more continuity of line than a barn dance, and less cumulative fervor. People take their turns in it, repeat their "numbers," just as at a barn dance. Especially evident in this piece, with its patent mixture of hayseed exuberance and puritan primness, is Miss Graham's habit of parodying the classical-modern figures, a parody that reveals the keen eye with which she has studied the ingenuities of Balanchine, Massine, and others. But it is precisely where, for instance, the romantic sex-play of Balanchine has sophistication and wit that Miss Graham has childish imitativeness

—and I mean something consciously infantile in that her whimsical style is that of the child imitating the grown-up or the adolescent self-consciously acting the coquette. Both Tudor and Balanchine have introduced choreographic audacities of a sexual sort such as obviously purposeful twinings and rolling-over-one-another on the floor. But somehow Miss Graham (in “Appalachian Spring”) manages to suggest the inadvertent about her physical intimacies with her partner, Erick Hawkins. Moreover, one much doubts the taste, here, of the close waltz-embrace so typical of nightclub dance teams, and quite foreign to Appalachians. When Miss Graham rolls over on the floor by herself, it is the tantrum of a temperamental child that we see, or rather, in its odd sublimation, it is a parody of that tantrum. The feeling of parody haunts Miss Graham’s choreography. It is not the consciously manipulated parody which a satirical choreographer might employ to render the timid and secret amours of hillbillies or Puritans, but parody by the haplessly child choreographer of the truly adult choreographer. Just as the dance character ritually conceived by Miss Graham is one who, perforce and grotesquely, parodies sexual pride and skill, Miss Graham, the choreographer, incongruously parodies the choreographic pride and skill of Massine, Balanchine, Lifar, et al. The choreography of “Appalachian Spring” is as full of classical-modern echoes as a certain type of neurotic is of tics. And like the actual neurosis, Graham dance spectacles lack definite development, climax, and catharsis. Instead of ending, they go virtually into cataleptic trances or states of somnambulism.

I cannot deny that Miss Graham is capable of eloquently expressive gesture, and her carriage is memorable for its individuality, but I am certain that any genius she has does not go beyond pantomimic kinetics. The essence of her dance is a symbolic triumph over spastic tendencies in the moral realm. Only a neurologist’s eye is needed to criticize the choreographic style of “Deaths and Entrances” (probably Miss Graham’s best and most serious effort) as saturated with the physical motifs of case histories. Any drama or pictorial interest which Miss Graham’s dance may have comes from the fact that she sets against the convulsive mannerisms of the neurotic the ritual calisthenic and the adamant conscience of the health-enthusiast. If beauty of line, plastic grace, sublimity of gesture, peep through this process—if one is aware of fugitive dance-flow—it is only because the tradition of dance as an instrument of triumphant bodily pride cannot easily be expunged from human consciousness. As with modern male gymnasts, the subtraction of sexual pride from the total conception of bodily pride has resulted in the atrophy of dance form on the one hand and its elephantiasis on the other, an elephantiasis expressing itself in the dynamics of movement rather than in muscles.

Denis Devlin

## BALLAD OF MISTRESS DEATH

"O I've had ten men before you"  
Said my redhead Sally  
"Yes, and a hundred men before you"  
Said my new-found darling.  
The sea's blue maw glittered  
Like a fat, barbaric queen's  
And her thighs were white and golden  
Like wisp-rain in sunshine.

In the long hall with statues  
We sat and were not lonely,  
Her name all forgotten,  
My darkhead, my darling  
Said in a gentle voice:  
"And you never will be jealous  
Though many's the man's head  
Has lain upon my pillow,  
For you've found out my secret  
And many's the man more will."

"Yes, I've found out your secret."  
Said I to my darling,  
Walking the dark streets  
Through leaf-shaken lamplight.  
"I never will be jealous  
Nor you numb or nag at me;  
I'll name you the world's most beauty  
O blond and blithe as Helen!  
And no lie be telling;  
No woman will disprove it."

She held me like nightfall  
Her breath came like knives,  
While the housing plains sank lower  
With their cinder-grates of cities—  
Oh, there will need no porters  
When all those doors open!



Leane Zugsmith

## THE ROYAL SIGN

By the time Mrs. Berrey cast her horoscope for the day, it was well into the forenoon. Although the reading took her longer than it would when she was more practised, she did not begrudge the labor. In the first place, she rarely made many sales before noon. In the second place, the sun was in a perfectly wonderful position for her and it looked as though she were due for something special very soon, perhaps today. Promptly she anticipated a dramatic surprise, for she had not been discontented for some time. No, busy as she had been all her fifty-eight years, Mrs. Berrey could not remember when she had felt so enlightened, so confident, so infatuated with her work and her future. And it had been a full rich life, she thought tenderly, no matter what others might choose to do.

The unexpected event, she considered, could be anything, perhaps a notice in the paper that one of her former husbands had died and his lawyer was searching for her, the sole heir. She had been exposed to many surprises in her time, more of them good than bad, too. Indeed, now that she was working in New York again, if she were to run across her first, Johnny Macfie, right in the street today, it would afford her more relish than astonishment.

With this possible encounter in mind, Mrs. Berrey put on her long gun-metal earrings and took care in arranging scallops of purplish-black dyed hair over her forehead. She did not fail to wear all her rings, the aquamarine, the onyx and the matrix turquoise. Each had been a gift from one of her three vanished husbands whose photographs, sallow with age, were pasted to the inside of her trunk lid. They had all loved her, she thought with pleasure, even Ralph, her second, whom she should never have married because he was born under Virgo—she knew that now. Still, she had loved Ralph, too, as she loved every one she had ever known. She reconsidered this and made an exception: no, she did not love her sister-in-law. And although she had not laid eyes on Adelaide Plumb for twelve years, although she now knew that her brother's widow was a Gemini with all the worst, undeveloped characteristics of those people, she would never love her or forgive her.

Adelaide had always looked down her nose at Mrs. Berrey. Adelaide had disapproved of every one of Mrs. Berrey's husbands, she had been scandalized at her vaudeville career, she had never thought Stanley Plumb's family was good enough for her. After Stanley died, she refused to allow Mrs. Berrey to see their child again. Donald was seven then and Mrs. Berrey's only nephew; but Adelaide was boss. Still, that's the

way Geminis are when they're undeveloped, Mrs. Berrey reminded herself, and she resolved not to spoil the beautiful sunny day and the unexpected event by thinking of her one enemy.

Riding toward Fourteenth Street, with the imitation leather case on her lap, in her handbag the printed cards, *Mrs. Ethel Macfie Hubbard Berrey, Consultant on the Stars*, she looked with fond interest at all the passengers near her. She felt friendly toward every last one of them; she wished she could help them. If it were practicable, she would have opened her case, set it upon its folding tripod and explained to them how the stars and the planets influenced everything about them. However, since it was difficult enough to set up shop on the sidewalk without a policeman looming into sight, she did not propose to experiment inside a bus. So far, she had managed to scamper away before an officer could get near her. The case could be packed up quick as a wink and it was a feather to carry. Nevertheless, she frequently believed that an exception should be made in her case. True, she was selling on the streets but she was merely making available, for only twenty-five cents, priceless pamphlets on astrology which was a science and a boon.

At the same time, Mrs. Berrey did not harbor resentment against the police. They, too, were governed by solar currents. And even if she had not recognized this, she would be unable to stay cross. She was a Leo, kind-hearted, sympathetic and, best of all, magnetic. Oh, it had explained everything when she had learned about her sign. Nodding until her earrings wagged, Mrs. Berrey smiled at her happy secret and when she noticed a passenger regarding her with curiosity, she did not trouble to compose her face. Leo people have courage, they do what they want, she reflected; and so she had, all her life, and regretted nothing.

Alighting from the bus, Mrs. Berrey decided to try for the spot near the Salvation Army building. Maybe her surprise would merely be to find it vacant of pitchmen, she thought and, for a moment, her spirits flagged. That was not enough of a treat to satisfy her, for almost any location was productive for her these days. Yes, poor souls, with a terrible war on and nobody knowing what was going to happen next, they were wild to know what was in store for them. Mrs. Berrey was the one to help them; as she often said, astrology was like mathematics. Folks in these times couldn't risk guessing-games and they showed it; sometimes they positively clamored for her pamphlets.

There was no one near the Salvation Army building, no police, not even the jolly necktie vendor who often preceded her. And now she told herself that perhaps the surprise would be to sell out immediately. In that case, she would not go back for replacements, no, she would give herself a holiday. She would stop in the five-and-ten and buy half a pound of chocolate creams and lie down on her bed and read. There,

in her own little room in the lodging-house, she could enjoy herself as luxuriously as a queen in her castle. Her landlady said that the way Mrs. Berrey gave her room the personal touch was a miracle. Wherever she stayed and, Lord, there had been a legion of dwelling places, she covered the bureau with her own hand-embroidered scarf, she started a plant growing and with her trunk just like a homey piece of furniture, she could make even a closet cosy in no time.

Her case, opened now and set up on the tripod, reminded her a little of the trunk but only because the zodiac was glued to the inside of the lid. That was her blackboard; it made her feel like a lecturer. With the miniature pointer poised in one hand, she delicately indicated the moon and, raising her voice only a little, said to the passersby:

"Way back in the seventeenth century, an astrologer foretold the horrible fire and plague in London. Yes, ma'am, fifteen years before it ever happened."

Then, the way they always did these days, they began to cluster around her. She singled out the worried-looking young girl, husband or boy-friend in the service, she guessed. The girl whispered her birth-date and Mrs. Berrey said: "See, you've been born on this mark here. Under the sign of Taurus, the Bull. That's why we often say people look stubborn as a bull. Only you don't have to be. Look at this." She handed a pamphlet to the girl and addressed the others:

"The astrologer who wrote these books, he's a Fellow of the Universal Brotherhood. His books prove he's the greatest astrologist in the world." She distributed a few among her listeners. "Why, he's written about astrology for forty-four years. Here, look, his first book was put out in 1900!"

They were impressed, all right, they were just falling all over themselves to buy, she thought, gratified. And each time she made a sale, she tendered her card. "Here's my name and address," she said. "If this doesn't do you any good, I don't want it to do you any harm. I'll send you your quarter back."

Occupied as she was, however, Mrs. Berrey did not neglect to keep her eyes peeled for approaching officers of the law. She was staying in luck, though, this was surely the day the sun was treating her right. As new-comers approached, her tones became more ringing and more melodious. "In the Bible, the prophets knew about astrology," she began.

At this moment, her voice faltered and she had to steady the pointer in her trembling fingers. For there was her sister-in-law, Adelaide Plumb, making her way to the front of the group, dressy as all get-out but with her wintry face snootier than ever. And beside her was a young sailor, Donald, it couldn't be any one else. Mrs. Berrey was seeing her nephew at last: this was the surprise.

As Mrs. Berrey mastered herself, she noted that Donald did not look at all like his stiff, sour mother. He was a born Plumb and born, what was more, on August the first. He was a Leo, too! She fixed her eyes on the boy's thin face. "Now, here's a fine young sailor, he has the look of a lad born under the sign of Leo." She did not give him time to answer although she was sure she heard Adelaide utter a small gasp. "Leo children are always sensitive," Mrs. Berrey cried out passionately. "Leo children are often misunderstood, even their own mothers don't understand their grand and noble traits. Leo is the House of the Sun, the Royal Sign!"

The boy held out a dollar bill. "I'll take one of those books," he said, without a glance at Adelaide.

She hated to take Donald's money but she knew it wouldn't do to single him out for a gift. As she made change for him, she cast a crafty look at her sister-in-law. Then she handed the boy one of her cards and she knew, although he stuck it away without looking at it, he would read it later. He would know it was his own Aunt Ethel and he would come to see her, whether his mother liked it or not.

Adelaide had not moved. She was staring intently at Mrs. Berrey and now she said in a low strained voice: "Which is my sign, please?"

"I'll guess it," Mrs. Berrey answered recklessly. "I'll guess you were born under the sign of Gemini. In all the twelve signs of the zodiac there are none whose family pride is greater." Enchanted with this opportunity, Mrs. Berrey found herself able, for once, to parrot all the lines she had memorized. "Geminis are fond of tracing back into their family history. They're always borrowing trouble and crossing bridges before they come to them. They judge by personal appearances. Geminis should not criticize others—" Sharply Mrs. Berrey broke off, dived for the tripod, folded it and slammed into the case almost in a single movement. By the time the policeman was nearly beside her, she was on the move. That was a close one, she told herself, swinging the case, trying to appear casual; that was careless of me to forget to keep watchout.

But she had not walked more than a few yards when she realized that some one was abreast of her. She slid a nervous glance to her right and saw that her companion was a woman. Then she looked full at her. It was Adelaide who worked her mouth a little before she said, timidly to her: "You don't mind my walking with you for a little way, do you, Ethel?"

Mrs. Berrey stopped and looked behind. "Donald?" she said with excitement. "Where did he go to?"

Her sister-in-law swallowed before she answered: "He's not here."

"I saw him, in his sailor suit, right beside you."



"Donald's in the army," Adelaide said slowly. "I don't know who that sailor was."

"Well, I'll be." Mrs. Berrey looked at her sister-in-law with suspicion and then relented. Adelaide was telling the truth, she could sense that. She added briskly: "Never mind. Everything I said for that boy went for Donald. Everything!"

Adelaide's voice was unsteady. "Can you tell what will happen to him, too?"

"I could cast his horoscope. If he asked me to."

"He won't ask you." Adelaide hesitated. "But I do."

Mrs. Berrey put down the case. It was nearly empty now yet it seemed to drag her down. Her feet burned and she knew, for one dull moment, that all she wanted was to crawl back into bed and rest, no chocolate creams, no reading matter, just rest. She couldn't bear to think of using a pair of compasses or of beating her tired brains consulting the awful complicated tables she was trying to master.

"You'd find fault," she replied, at last.

"I've got to know," Adelaide said desperately. "He's overseas. I've got to know."

"You didn't tell me that," Mrs. Berrey said painfully. Of course, he was overseas, the way they all were. Except that, in spite of the strange sailor, she still saw Donald as a seven-year-old boy with a gap in his front teeth and iodine painted on his scraped knees.

"I've got to know," Adelaide repeated. "I've tried cards and tea-leaves, I've gone to palmists—"

"Fortune-telling!" Mrs. Berrey interrupted scornfully. "This is a science, this is like mathematics." She picked up the case and took her sister-in-law's arm. "Come right along to my place and I'll cast his right away."

Adelaide let herself be guided along the street. Her face did not seem at all haughty now, just crumpled and helpless. Gemini people can remedy their faults, of course, Mrs. Berrey reminded herself and she said aloud in a deliberately cheerful voice:

"I'll take care of it, Adelaide. Don't you worry." She hailed a bus as though it were a taxicab. "Donald and I are both Leos, you know. Our motto is: love me, love my dog."

**Louis Aragon**

## **IN THE FOURTH SUMMER OF OUR APOCALYPSE**

In the fourth summer of our apocalypse,  
A strange whiteness appears on the horizon.

Does it mean we will come to the end of the eclipse?  
Hope palpitates in the straw of prisons.

Do you hear the night shuddering like a door?  
This is the dawn which makes the hangmen pale.

Unquiet princes return with a strong escort  
To their wives to wash their bloodstained clothes.

The empire of fear, their domain until now,  
Gives a different course to the torrent of talks.

For the first time, human words divide  
The lips of tyrants and do not kill.

Speaking of asylum, they say: "It's madness!"  
Today when a child dies somewhere.

Henceforth they can by cooing love songs  
Prove to the universe their great heart is breaking,

The face always reappears beneath the grime.  
The murderers are counted, the register closed

To those who justifying crime with crime  
Took pleasure in listening to the concert of sobs.

Once we were fodder for their horses;  
And, upright in their chariots and dark exploits

Strength being the rule for the mind it outrages,  
They would have laughed at the madmen who refused its law.

To change everything in their metaphysic  
Simply a show of light was enough;

It was enough to vary the music a little  
To change everything in their philosophy.

Bizarre season in a bizarre time  
When the wolf wishes to evangelize the forest!

Mournful cushions spilling their stuffing  
Opening to all comers their belly and secrets,

We see orators at the crossroads of Europe,  
Sweating the despair of a cause that is lost,

Scarecrows dressed in philanthropists' frock-coats  
Which make in the early light the gestures of hanged-men.

The disaster they don't want to believe is upon them.  
In the wind they brandish the stump of a sword.

But the crowd about them is a living mirror  
In which their image already is headless.

In vain they lie with their immense words  
And pretend that dawn is the climax of terror;

In vain they put on the gloves of clemency,  
Say that their coming was providential;

In vain they baptise shadows as light,  
Lift ignorance to the rank of a virtue,

Force the step of their funeral march on us,  
Replace our statues with stranger gods,

Teach being cowards and preaching slavery,  
Conquer the air with the smell of the plague,

Condemn men to the brothel, make widows of women,  
Dirty and muddle and dishonor all;

In vain they still command their gendarmes;  
In vain only sleep sitting on their loot,

They cannot conceal the colour of their tears:  
After all, the night must be followed by morning,

The dawn must consume in its coppery hands  
These kings of shade and their rotten succentors,

And the burning earth must deliver itself  
From false Crusaders, from phantom makers!

They are afraid, they fear all that breathes.  
A song by a cradle. A bird in the summer.

At the sound with a beating heart they crouch down:  
For them all is ghosts, chains, and haunted houses.

Steps in their sleep seem to bring up the guard . . .  
What are they dreaming that makes them turn so?

Their memory's on fire, their soul full of thorns.  
In their turn, in their turn, they are being tortured!

Everyone can see the snakes coming forth  
From these hell-mouths speaking of white birds.

Everyone can see the martyrs behind them  
Making a bloody sign with down-thrust thumbs.

Everyone can see the black awakening of traitors,  
When sunlight at last buffets their disarray.

Everyone can see the priest beside them  
Tragically holding a cross to be kissed.

Everyone can see the future which bites them.  
Everyone can see the wheel turned upon them.

Everyone can see them sentenced to die  
And the blood splashing out where the ball goes in.

They wear in their flesh the terrible stigmata  
Of what is to be, and they hide them in vain.

And in this wax day with automatons' faces  
Already they gather for the Musée Grevin.

—*Translated by* WILLIAM MEAD



Fred Urquhart

## WE NEVER DIED IN WINTER

The first month I was in the Royal Georgian Hospital for Tuberculosis the girls in Mathieson's visited me regularly, but when winter came I got fewer and fewer visitors. Soon, Roddy was the only one I could depend upon. He came on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. At first he used to say: "When are you going to get out of here?" But after a while he stopped asking: he must have realized how foolish his question was. Sometimes I had the feeling as he sat beside my bed that he blamed himself because I was there. If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have gone to see the doctor in the first place. But early one morning when we were coming home from a dance he said: "Can't you walk a bit quicker? You're trailing along there as if you couldn't help it."

"Neither I can," I said.

And honestly I was dead-beat. It wasn't the result of the dance, for I'd felt like this before I went to it. I'd felt like this for such a long time that I couldn't remember when exactly I'd first noticed it. Indeed, I hadn't noticed it at all. It was so much part of me that it was as natural as any other feeling. I was always tired and dispirited. I used to think it was boredom.

"Snap out of it," Roddy said. "You'd better see a doctor if you're not going to brighten up a bit."

I tried to walk more quickly, but that only made me cough.

"That cold of yours never seems to get any better," Roddy said. "You'd better see the doctor. Maybe you need a tonic."

"Maybe," I said.

Next day I went to the doctor, and the first thing he said was: "Good God, girl, why didn't you come to see me sooner?"

"I thought it was just an ordinary cold," I said.

"How long have you had it?" he said.

"About three years," I said. "On and off."

"Good God!" he said.

I must have looked shocked, for he said: "Some of you people would make a saint swear. Why don't you go and see a doctor when there's anything wrong with you? What do you think we doctors are here for?"

And straightaway he ordered me off to the Royal Georgian. I was put into Ward Five beside the other Artificial Pneumathorics patients who were on "Strict" bed. It was August: lovely warm weather. I had been looking forward to going to Blackpool for the first fortnight in September, and I was mad at having to go to my bed. It wasn't as if I felt ill, really ill, that is. Still it'll be for only a week or two, I said to

myself, then you'll be better and you'll get home. The first day I was so miserable that I hardly spoke to anybody, but I soon cheered up. What was the good of moping, anyway? I had T.B. so that was an end of it. And I got talking to the other girls in the ward.

I discovered that there were three other Marys beside myself—Mary Thompson, Mary Gibson and Mary Coates. We often used to sing that old song that Mary, Queen of Scots and her ladies-in-waiting sang: *Last night there were four Marys. Tonight there will be but three.* But after a few weeks we didn't sing it any more. It made us feel sad and made us think that maybe it might turn out to be true.

Mary Gibson had been in the R.G. for six months; Mary Thompson for two months; and Mary Coates for three months. This was Mary Coates' second visit, though. Eighteen months ago she had been in for six months. "But it's my own fault that I'm here again," she said. "I didn't do what the Chief told me. I'll know better this time. No smoking, no dancing, no pictures, no nothing. When I get out I'm going to be a blooming plaster saint!"

We all laughed, but somehow or other we didn't think it very funny, because Mary's face was almost blue and her sputum-bottle was hardly ever out of her hands.

I came in on a Wednesday, and Roddy came to see me on the first visiting-day, Saturday. When he came he sat and glowered. He was uncomfortable at seeing so many girls in pyjamas and bed-jackets. All the men who visited the ward had that lost look the first two or three times they came, but they always lost it sooner or later. Roddy wanted to know exactly what the doctor had said and what they had done to me and how long I'd be in.

So I tried my best to tell him. I said: "He says that one of my lungs is touched, and that all I need is a rest. The work in Mathieson's is too confining and he says I'll have to get another job where I'll get more fresh air when I get my discharge."

"When will that be?" Roddy said.

"Maybe six weeks," I said. "I dunno. It depends on how long they keep my lung collapsed."

"Your lung collapsed?" he said.

"Sure," I said. "It's collapsed, and I'm getting Artificial Pneumathorics treatment."

Everybody who came wanted to know what Artificial Pneumathorics was, and I got fed-up explaining it to them. Nobody in the R.G. ever called it by its full name; we all said that so-and-so was an A.P. case and we left it at that. Life, we felt, was too short for such long words. But all my visitors were interested and wanted to know everything about my illness. They looked at me as if I were some kind of beast in a cage when

I told them that one of my lungs was collapsed. "But you *look* all right," they said. "You look so healthy, you really shouldn't be lying in your bed at all."

I laughed and said that it was the air in my "Summer Residence" that did the trick. They all thought that "Summer Residence" was a good one and they said to each other: "Mary keeps wonderfully cheerful, doesn't she?" as if they were disappointed at not finding me in tears.

Each patient is allowed only two visitors at a time in the wards, but you can get as many as you like when you're in the shelters. Or as many as will come to see you. Usually by the time the patient gets into the shelters her visitors are tired of coming to see her; the novelty of visiting a consumptive friend has worn off. That's what happened to me, anyway. Often in the winter when I was in one of the shelters I wished that some of the visitors I'd had at first hadn't been so anxious to come and see me then, but had waited till I really looked like an invalid.

These first two or three Sundays, for instance, I had so many visitors that they had to take turns to come in to see me, five or ten minutes at a time. They all brought me sweets and flowers and fruit and pretty soon my bed began to look like a shop-counter. I got tired telling each of them all the ins and outs of the treatment I was getting, so I wasn't sorry when four or five of them sneaked in at once. But they weren't there for long before Sister came in and said in her snippy way: "Only two at a time allowed."

Roddy got annoyed because all the girls were there. "I can't get a chance to speak to you at all," he said. And he asked away from his work and came on Wednesdays, too. Mother always came on Wednesdays, and she and Roddy sat and stared at each other and things were so uncomfortable that I had to do most of the talking myself.

But Mother wasn't so quiet when Roddy wasn't there. She grumbled because I needed so many things when I came in and because I wanted something else every week. "Your middle name should be *Want*," she said. "Where do you think I get the money?"

My pay hadn't been very big, but she missed it. When I came into hospital I applied for National Health Benefit but I was told that, although I was eligible for it, I wouldn't get anything until I got my discharge from the R.G. Then I'd get it in case I wasn't able to start work at once.

"Why can't they give it to you just now?" Mother said.

"Because they say the R.G. supplies all I need," I said.

"Well, in that case why did you ask me to buy a dressing-gown and pyjamas and a bed-jacket?" she said.

"Who was going to wear the flannel night-gown the R.G. provides?" I said, laughing. "I didn't want to look like Little Orphan Annie."

"You're like your father," she said. "You never think of where the money's to come from. Oh, the lord will provide! You're jack-easy, both of you."

"What's he saying about me being in here?" I said.

But I knew before she told me. I knew that Dad's remark when things were looking blackest was always *We never died in winter yet!* He never worried; he left that to Mother. "One worried face is enough in the house at a time," he said.

Dad didn't come to see me till the third Sunday I was in the R.G. He sat uncomfortably at my bedside and he looked around. "You're getting plenty of fresh air, anyway," he said, nodding at all the wide-open windows. "A change for you, eh?"

"You bet," I said.

"It's funny to see you lying here," he said.

"Is it?" I said. "You wouldn't think it so funny if it were you."

"I mean that it's funny to see you lying practically in the open-air when you think of how you always wanted all the windows shut at home."

"Isn't it?" I said.

"Your mother says you're eating well," he said.

"You bet," I said.

"You were always such a pick," he said.

"Wasn't I?" I said.

"Changed days!" he said.

"You bet," I said.

And honestly it was changed days. When I first came in I ate everything they gave me. Perhaps it was due to the fresh air and to not working, but I think it was mainly because of the greater variety that the R.G. kitchen offered. You simply don't feel hungry when you know that at home you get stew on Mondays, mince on Tuesdays, sausages on Wednesdays, and so on.

Dad looked from bed to bed: from Mary Coates' blue face to Liz Jerome's white one. "You look all right, anyway," he said, and I thought there was a note of relief in his voice. "See that you do everything the doctor tells you," he said.

"You bet," I said.

And honestly I did what I was told. I was a model patient. Every time he examined me the Chief was pleased. I put on weight. I was only seven and a half stone when I came in, but it wasn't long before I was nine stones. "I'm going to get a job as a fat lady in a circus when I get out of here," I told my visitors.

I was on "Strict" bed for six weeks, and in a way I passed the time pleasantly enough. It was very restful to lie there by the open window



and to look out at the lovely gardens, and it was fine to know that I didn't need to rush and go to work. It was just like being on holiday. The R.G. was more like a hotel than a hospital. And once I had got used to the idea of having T.B., I was prepared to make the best of it. It wasn't as if I had any pain. Not like Mary Coates, who was sometimes so bad that she couldn't speak: she just lay and stared at the ceiling. But the rest of us passed the time in talking and knitting and writing letters. I wrote so many letters that the house-doctor asked me if I was writing a book. At first, everybody that I wrote to answered, but pretty soon I didn't get any answers. So I stopped writing and spent all my time knitting.

I knitted myself a lemon jumper and I started to knit a mauve one, but I stopped when I found that my clothes didn't fit me the same. "I'll need to wait till I stop expanding!" I said. And I knitted a jumper for Mother and socks for Roddy. I began to knit him a pullover for his birthday, but I never finished it. It's lying in my case now. Sometimes I think I'll unravel it and knit something else, but I haven't the heart. I can't bear to look at it after what happened.

At the beginning of November when I was allowed up most of the day I was put in one of the shacks. Or the shelters, as Matron called them; she was annoyed when one of the few letters I got was addressed to Shack Number Four. There were twelve shacks and they lay in a half-circle at the top of the lawn. They had only three sides and there were windows in each side, so we got plenty of fresh air. They were on swivels and the nurses turned them round whenever the wind changed. We weren't allowed to turn them round ourselves, though sometimes when the wind changed through the night we got up and had them shifted before the Night Nurse got our length; we preferred the risk of being reported to the Chief to the risk of having the wind drive the rain onto us, for though we had water-proof covers on our beds there was always the chance that the wind would blow in such strong gusts that it would drive the rain in as far as our pillows.

Usually the shacks faced the road so that we saw all the traffic that passed. Sometimes Mathieson's big van passed, and Alfie the driver always waved to me. Once or twice I spoke to him over the wall and he told me all the latest news of the shop. But I was never able to speak freely to him; I always had to keep my eyes skinned for Sister; we weren't supposed to speak to anybody over the wall. Especially men. We weren't even allowed to speak to the male-patients. We did, of course. We wouldn't have been human if we hadn't spoken to them. And the fact that it was forbidden added to the fun.

There were some awfully nice boys amongst them. You'd never

have thought to see some of them that there was anything wrong with them. Sometimes I used to think that it was even harder on them than it was on us; a woman can be a chronic invalid all her life, yet she can manage to muddle through some way or other because she's usually dependent on somebody else, but a man simply can't afford to be an invalid if he has his living to make like those boys. It was a pretty black outlook for them. All the same they managed to keep cheerful.

It was a terribly severe winter. Folk said it was the worst they'd ever experienced. But they didn't really know anything about it. If they'd been in the R.G. they'd have died. Sometimes I wonder why I didn't die myself. But it's funny that none of the patients died in the winter, though some of them have died since. The few people who came to see me huddled themselves in their heavy coats and gave exaggerated shivers. "I don't know how you stand it," they said. "I'd be dead within three days." But I just laughed and said: "You get used to everything but hanging!" And sometimes I used to sing *I wouldn't leave my little wooden hut for you! I've got one lover and I don't want two!*

All the same it was no joke when the Night Nurse wakened us in the mornings. Especially on those mornings the snow lay thick on the ground for weeks. We used to wake and find it lying three or four inches thick on our water-proof covers. We were supposed to get up at seven o'clock, but Nurse usually wakened us at ten to seven, so that gave us a few minutes to pluck up courage. We always lay to the very last minute and then we would begin to count and as soon as we had reached twenty we'd jump out of bed and pull on our coats over our pyjamas. Then Wilma would race me to the bathroom in Ward Five. We weren't supposed to run, but we knew that it wasn't likely that either Sister or Matron would see us at that time in the morning.

I don't know what I'd have done without Wilma. She was a real cheery case, and she and I got along fine. She had been in for two months longer than I had and she was always talking about getting her discharge, for she was engaged to get married as soon as she got out. But she didn't keep moaning about it and make both herself and me miserable as Liz Jerome would have done if she had been in Wilma's place.

When I think of it, I realize how lucky I was to get Wilma for a shack-mate and not Liz Jerome, who was put in the shacks at the same time as I was. Liz was awful sentimental and she cried at the least thing. Every time we played the gramophone in the Recreation room she cried at all the sad records. The first time she heard *When I Grow Too Old To Dream* you'd have thought she was at a funeral, and when I laughed she said: "You've got a brick for a heart, Marry Orr."

But I just laughed all the more. If I hadn't laughed I'd have cried even more than Liz was crying herself. For I'd just got the letter from Roddy that morning.

If I'd known that Roddy was looking for another job I wouldn't have got such a shock when I got his letter. But I had no idea that he was dissatisfied with his work; he seemed to be getting along all right. That was why I took it so hard, him doing it behind my back. I felt that either he hadn't been interested enough to tell me or that he had been afraid to tell me in case I tried to stop him—though God knows I wouldn't have done that; I was too keen for him to get on so that we could get married. Or was he afraid that I was in the R.G. for "keeps"? It was only then that I realized that I'd been there for nearly five months and that there was no likelihood of getting out soon. I tried not to worry about it, but all the time the feeling was there and however hard I tried I couldn't escape from it.

Not that Roddy had ever shown that he thought I was in the R.G. for good. Every Saturday and Sunday up to Christmas he visited me regularly. Some time before that he stopped coming on Wednesdays since I hadn't so many visitors and he could get me all to himself when he came. I was glad of that, but sometimes I couldn't help wishing that somebody would come in and give us something to talk about. For Roddy had absolutely no conversation whatsoever. He had never been a great talker, but I had always managed to find something to interest him. In the R.G. however, I was simply lost. It was just what I'd imagine prison would be like. Sometimes we didn't see newspapers for days. There was always the wireless, of course, but we never listened to anything but dance-music; as soon as we heard talking we switched it off. So I didn't know very well what to say when Roddy came, unless it was to talk about the other patients, and he wasn't very much interested in them. All he seemed interested in was how long I was going to be there. He never seemed able to realize that I had T.B. "You shouldn't be in here," he often said. "Why, you look as well as I do."

At Christmas and the New Year he was busy at his work so he could come in only for a little while on Christmas and New Year's days. He came the first Sunday in the new year, but he didn't come on the following Saturday or Sunday. I had no idea of what could have kept him, and when I didn't get any letter on the Monday I began to be worried. I knew that he wasn't a great hand at writing letters, but I thought that he might have let me know what was wrong.

The letter came on the Tuesday. It was very short and said that he had suddenly got a job in London and that he had had to go very quickly and hadn't had time to come in to see me before he went.

Of course, I found plenty of excuses for him. But, at the same time, I knew that he could easily have come in, even although it had been only for a few minutes. And not being on a visiting-day wouldn't have mattered. Matron would have allowed him in at once if he had just asked. After all, it wasn't as if I were a prisoner or anything like that. I shut myself in the bathroom and started to cry, but I stopped when I remembered that I hadn't any powder with me. I didn't want any of the girls to know that I'd been crying. In case they thought it strange about Roddy not coming to visit me any more I said casually that I'd known that he was going to a job in London but that I hadn't thought of mentioning it to them.

Roddy wrote to me every week at first and told me all about his new job; he was always anxious to know if I was feeling better and if I'd be able to get out soon. In one of his first letters he mentioned that he hoped to get a raise after he had been there for six months, so this would mean that we'd be able to get married. And in a letter two or three weeks after that he said that he was thinking about putting his name down for one of the new houses in a Building Scheme that was going up. Of course I made a lot of plans in the letters I wrote to him, telling him the kind of house I thought we should have and things like that, but sometimes I couldn't help wondering if those plans would ever come to anything. For my Discharge seemed as far away as ever. I had stopped putting on weight; somehow or other I just didn't have the same appetite as I'd had when I came in. And at the end of January I got a cold and didn't seem able to throw it off. Apart from those things the Chief always seemed well enough pleased with me, but whenever I mentioned Discharge he would shake his head and say: "There's time enough for that, my dear young lady."

All February, March and April I got letters regularly twice a week from Roddy. Then he told me not to be surprised if he didn't write so often as he was going to be very busy before the Coronation; his firm had a lot of contracts and he was working overtime. "I'm saving up," he wrote, "so it will be better for us both in the long run." I didn't mind at all so long as I knew he was well enough. And, although he wrote only one short letter every week and then towards the Coronation only once a fortnight, I wrote to him regularly twice a week. I told him all the funny things that happened in the R.G. so as to show him that I was keeping my pecker up and wasn't losing hope after being there for nearly nine months. And really there were quite a lot of funny things that happened just about that time.

For instance, there was the time that some male-patients climbed the wall and went off for the afternoon. They often did that and nobody ever found out. But this afternoon they went to Princess Street Gardens



and the first person they met was Sister. It was her afternoon off, and that was one of the reasons why they had been bold enough to go that far. They didn't know what to do; it was too late to cut and run. But Sister just smiled sweetly at them and said: "Good afternoon, boys," and walked past as if they were just casual acquaintances.

After that none of the Males would hear us say anything against Sister. They said she wasn't a bad sort, but we told them that it was only because she was an old maid and had a soft spot in her heart for men.

She wasn't bad to us either, sometimes. It all depended if you got the right side of her. She could be real mean sometimes, but there were times when she was quite human.

One of these times was on the day of the Coronation of George VI. She came into the Recreation Room when we were listening to the Broadcast from Westminster Abbey and she said: "Have any of you girls got any sweeties?"

"No, Sister," I said, and it was the truth.

"Have you?" she said to Wilma.

Wilma had, but she thought that Sister was going to confiscate them, so she said: "No, Sister."

"Have you?" Sister said to Liz.

"Y-Yes, Sister," Liz said in a low voice.

"You might bring them," Sister said. "I feel like eating a sweetie."

Liz was so flabbergasted that she brought two tins. Sister took them and sat down with them on her lap. She ate continually for the next hour while listening to the service, and at the long bits where there was nothing but the pealing of the organ she told us all about her life when she was a girl.

But Sister could be real mean, too. Like the time when she reported Wilma and me to the Chief for talking to the Males, and she didn't report any of the Males. She said that they had run so that she wasn't able to see who they were! But the Chief said that as neither Wilma nor I had run we were to be commended. So that was one in the eye for Sister. Some of the girls said that the reason why Sister was so changeable was that she had been in love with somebody who had jilted her, but I don't know if that was the reason or not. I don't think that anybody who had been jilted could be so mean to other folk. If you can't eat your cake yourself, there's no sense in keeping it from others.

I got a letter from Roddy a few days after the Coronation. I got two letters that morning. I kept Roddy's to the last like a kid with a fancy cake. I didn't know who the other letter was from, but when I opened it I found that it was from Mary Coates' mother.

All through the winter Mary Coates coughed and spluttered and her face got bluer and bluer. Soon she couldn't sit up in bed at all. In February the Chief wanted to send her to another hospital where she would get more specialized treatment (he said this though he knew there was no hope) but her mother wouldn't hear of it; she said that if Mary was going to die, she'd die at home. And though the Chief said it was a mistake Mrs. Coates took Mary away.

This was a letter to say that she was dead. I sat and looked at it for a long time. I knew that it was the best thing for Mary, but I thought how unfair it was, after she had struggled so hard all winter, to die just then when the summer was going to begin. I felt that I should pray for her, but it was such a long time since I had prayed that I didn't know how to start. I just sat on the edge of my bed and slowly I ripped open Roddy's letter.

I read it twice before I realized what it meant, and then I sat and stared at it, not thinking. I was sitting like that when Wilma ran into the shack. She was roaring and laughing and she collapsed on her bed. I looked at her for a while before I could manage to say: "What's wrong?"

She was laughing so much that she couldn't answer me, and she nearly choked when she started to tell me. "It's Liz Jerome," she said. "She's roaring and crying."

"That's nothing to laugh about," I said.

But Wilma laughed all the more when she heard the tone of my voice. "Oh, it's funny," she said. "You should go along and see her."

"I don't think it's funny at all," I said. "Maybe when the Chief examined her yesterday he told her something that she didn't tell us."

"No, it's not that at all," Wilma said. "She's reading a love-story and it's that sad that she can't help weeping."

I stood up slowly and held out the two letters. "Take those along and let her read them," I said. "Maybe they'll give her something to cry about. Mary Coates is dead, and my boy-friend has given me the heave."

That was three months ago. I'm back home again. Mother made me come home; she said I wasn't getting any better in the R.G. The Chief and she had an awful row about it; he said that she wasn't giving me a chance, nor him either; he wanted to study my case to find out why I had had such a relapse after getting so far along the road to recovery the first few months I was in. But Mother wouldn't hear anything he said, and she bundled me home. "She'll spend what time she has left among her own folk," she said. But Dad told her to shut up. "You're always looking on the black side, woman," he said. "We never died in winter yet. Did we, Mary?"

## Roland Mathias

### LAST HAPPINESS

In the wet pageantry tonight deploys  
For answer to my calling joys, I write  
A parting in the head of midnight's hair  
And picture it, there white  
And straight as daylight on the dress you wear.  
Blue flashing tits went beating up in droves  
From tree to tree within the groves, I lose  
In the blue streak the blackhead, one whose feet  
Held sideways to our house  
Of plaster. We were placed, we, in that beat  
Of wings and sideways in the whirring days.  
But we held on. Each life obeys the wind  
Beating or hanging in it. Underpinned we  
Paused by Penoyre and ringed  
The leg of fortitude we had in lee.  
Then through this circlet of the years the gay  
Breasts passed. A fox-brown comfort lay in fern  
Upon the hill top. The sun in turn, red  
With exertion, stopped to burn  
The moment for our ember day. Ahead  
Lay only flight late to the windways, fast  
As our beat was slow. Loth townwards, last to part,  
We joined the poor jargon of points, starting  
The beat again in heart  
In learning peas and pulse were one, a thing  
Of unity. Living we held the seed  
In hands of promise. Now the need comes, nears  
The night of days when purpose not fear's slack,  
And these in water swell indeed  
Only the weight of tears  
Only the deadweight tears calling you back, calling you back.

## May Sarton

### THE GIFTS

There was nowhere without  
A mountain. The horizon  
Opened like a shout,

A peal of silence, a huge organ  
Building wave upon wave  
Of music far and near:  
The high peaks rang  
So sharp and clear  
Sound shivered like a glass  
Struck in the air,  
And the rock sang.  
The light was music and the music, light.  
It mounted from green foot-hills  
To blue ranges out of sight.  
We heard the sound the mountains make.  
We heard the rock sing:  
This was the first gift, for joy's sake.

But then the vision grew—  
As if the iris that reflected all the sky  
Opened to the black pupil of an inward eye:  
The whole tortured world was what we knew.  
And all we listened to was children weeping,  
And all we cared was: they are in our keeping.  
And all we knew was our responsibility  
To build on earth the children's holy city.

The mountains shouted and were stilled  
By the great cry that the heart spilled.  
So we were given back ourselves again:  
The second, and the greater gift, was pain.

Herbert Cahoon

## THE SCENES OF EARTH

*to Mildred and Walter Houmère*

Straight down to the obsidian  
The earth crosses the rain.  
Travel is bitter over the island's grain;  
Locomotion in the bird-filled sky  
Has become noisy and difficult.

The landscape of a year  
Is now impossible to reach,  
Distance brings it  
Through the morning fog  
Past noontime,



But the hills are hot and dry.  
Only the ocean moves.

There are sea walls and corded monuments  
Not pretending to life or design.

The blocks and pendulum  
Fall in the evening  
From a great height  
Brighter than meteors.

The caged beauty of a saint.  
Even that is farther  
Than we have gone before.

## LITERARY INTELLIGENCE

Hardiman Scott

### POETRY IN BRITAIN — 1945

Parnassus has been in continual eruption in these islands during the past year. The amount of poetry published, despite acute paper shortage, has been prodigious. Were I to list the titles, authors and publishers of the volumes issued here in 1945, I should easily use up the space allotted for this letter. I shall, therefore, only select what seems to me the best and most representative trends of poetry in Britain during the year. By dealing with the books separately, I hope I'll give some kind of composite, albeit sketchy, picture of our 'poetry landscape.'

I want first to deal with two poets killed during the war—Sidney Keyes and Alun Lewis. *The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes*, edited by Michael Meyer (Routledge 7s. 6d.), reveal a poet at the centre of Death, but wholly conscious in a most remarkable way. Keyes had not reached the age of 21 when he was killed in Tunisia, but his talent was that of a mature poet. He accepted death, but its acceptance was original and personal. He was deeply conscious of his share of guilt and of evil, but he did not take this as a symbol of defeat. Rather, it was a challenge, and, with a clear vision, he probed into the significance of death and tried to give it personal interpretation in his poetry, a poetry full of exciting imagery and subtle rhythms. One of his great strengths is the forceful, imaginative quality of his verse. Acutely aware of the pain "that cries down the noise of poetry," he saw himself, too, in relation to history, and gave death an historical significance:—"Patiently giving time and strength and vision/ Even identity/ Into the future's keeping," and with courage achieved, in his war poems, a calm integration. Haunted, as he must have been, by his imaginative vision, he wrote with a brilliant intensity, and attained his finest expression in a long poem, "The Wilderness," and

*Here where the horned skulls mark the limit  
Of instinct and intransigent desire  
I beat against the rough-tongued wind  
Towards the heart of fire,*

and later he adds:—"This is my calling, to seek the red rock desert / And speak for all those who have lost the gardens, / Forgotten the singing, yet dare not find the desert— / To sing the song that rises from the fire." Then he proceeds to this magnificent utterance, which will give you the quality of his verse as well as of his nature:

*There is no parting  
From friends, but only from the ways of friendship:  
Nor from our lovers, though the forms of love  
Change often as the landscape of this journey  
To the dark valley where the gold bird burns,  
I say, Love is a wilderness and these bones  
Proclaim no failure, but the death of youth.  
We say, You must be ready for the desert  
Even among the orchards starred with blossom,  
Even in spring or at the waking moment  
When the man turns to the woman, and both are afraid.  
All who would save their life must find the desert—  
The lover, the poet, the girl who dreams of Christ,  
And the swift runner, crowned with another laurel:  
They all must face the sun, the red rock desert,  
And see the burning of the metal bird.*

Imaginatively, perhaps, Alun Lewis knew less of death, and certainly had not properly determined his relation to it before he died. He had an ingenuous ability to write personal poetry with more than personal significance. "I can't claim as much hold on the universal as some poets," he wrote, "and consider my poems as expressions of personal experience." But with this must be linked Lewis's statement: "My longing is more and more for one thing only, *integrity*." This longing, with a nature prone to know suffering, enabled him to integrate his personal experiences to produce poetry that has universal referents. Technically, this had the effect of making most of his poems formal wholes, and showed itself in a sensitive feeling for words. The same longing led him also, through Love, to the problem of Life and Death. "I'm more engrossed with the single poetic theme of Life and Death," he wrote to his wife, and since his philosophical and religious position was distinctly equivocal, he felt the implications of this theme acutely, but was unable to resolve its relationship to Love before he died. Throughout his last book, *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets* (Allen & Unwin, 5s.), the problem remains unresolved, and that lovely poem, "The Jungle," ends:

*And if the mute pads on the sand should lift  
Annihilating paws and strike us down  
Then would some unimportant death resound  
With the imprisoned music of the soul?  
And we become the world we could not change?  
Or does the will's long struggle end  
With the last kindness of a foe or friend?*

If he was uncertain about Life and Death in a personal cosmology, at least he died certain of one thing—"I know where I stand in love," and love, as Robert Graves says in an introduction, "is the orientation of every true poet."

Ronald Bottrall in *Farewell and Welcome* (Editions, Poetry, London, 6s.) also knows where he stands in love, but his experience is of the intellectual, analytical kind. His title poem states his requirements, catalogues our ills (much in the manner of Auden) defines love which, for him, is something that heightens awareness and "can be measured only with divine scales," and promises freedom through the acceptance of the great powers of love. Bottrall seems to recognise a fundamental duality, which love yet makes into a "sameless whole," but such a state is only achieved by enlightened and aesthetically aware persons; it requires "a more than temporal order." He is generally too verbose and prosy, and while he has considerable technical resources often abuses them and produces lines like:—"Positive and firm with autochthonic vigour."

One of the originators of the Apocalyptic Group, Henry Treece, in *The Black Seasons* (Faber 6s.) uses his familiar imagery of witches, princes, birds, lutes and Christian symbols, and sometimes his own lute is a little too fluent. In his first volume, Treece showed a strong religious instinct that sometimes conflicted with his own developing mythology. Now there is an attempt to reconcile the two, and when it comes off, he writes his best poetry. His real problem would seem to be the creation of an individual mythology that yet has religious, if not Christian, significance. The opening sonnet of "The Second Coming" (a long and sustained work) is typical Treece:—

*The days moved slowly with a sick-room breath;  
And then at midnight the great stone rolled.  
Who saw the tortured spirit cross the heath  
Like crackling leaf when Autumn wind blows wild?  
Not the poor soldier sodden with cheap wine,  
The helmet callous thick upon his chin:  
Nor the sick beggar coughing in the rain,  
Opening his rags to let cold bounty in. . . .*

Another Welshman, Idris Davies (*Tonybandy and Other poems*—raper 6s.) while he hasn't Treece's startling imagery, equally has not his fellow countryman's occasional obscurities, but he does suffer from the same fault of singing a little too easily. The tunes come tripping off his tongue with surprising banality sometimes:—"The cur shall be in clover, / The poet in the sleet, / Till Christ comes into Dover / With fire at his feet." Davies expresses his indignation for modern civilization with almost savage irony, but much of his verse is constructed on pleasant melodies, and his title poem is a most moving tribute to a Welsh miner.

The third Welshman has a greater talent than either Treece or Davies. He is Vernon Watkins, whose second book, *The Lamp and the Veil* (Faber 6s.) consists of three long poems, and the first, "Yeats in Dublin," in which he recalls a visit to Yeats with a friend, is a magnificent achievement. Not only does he use a regular stanza form with consummate skill, but he develops the poem with fitting imagery and careful control into an aesthetic whole. He has taken note of Yeats's advice, which he records:—

*'The young poets,' he murmured,  
'Toil too much. They lay  
Something on their table,  
And dissect, and wear it away*

*Till nothing but the grit is left;  
But all song is gay.'*

and again:—"Write, get rid of rhetoric; / Cut the dead wood away.'" The exotic texture of the other two poems does tend to obscure their meaning, which is a pity in the work of such a considerable craftsman. The first time I read "Sea Music for my Sister Travelling," it was for the music alone. It leaps, bounds, tumbles, ripples and runs with exciting music and the most varied and intricate rhythms. It is almost orchestral in design, and musically, he captures the whole movement of the sea, and seems to say, imaginatively, all that can be said. Read aloud the following, and you'll have some idea of the technique that Watkins can command and manage with such artistry—

*Far Northward speeding from the South-speeding ships,  
White, ever lost, in every wake a tale  
Of frost, of fire,  
Captured and lost desire,  
Of night, the alone, the lost, the never-known.*

*The entwining, sinuous, serpentine deep  
Clings to the vessel plunging through the lie  
And truth and tomb and doom and double-dye  
Of tossed foam, tossed and lost, where that Leviathan  
And the torpedo sleep.*

And there's a lovely invocation towards the end, which I haven't the room to quote.

Seán Jennett (*The Cloth of Flesh*—Faber 6s.) is another poet whose work is rich in ornament, but he hasn't Watkins's craftsmanship. Many of the poems in this book are reflections on the war and its effects upon the individual, and Jennett writes forcefully and with firm purpose, and he weaves into his lines some striking ornamental imagery.

The work of another Irishman, Roy McFadden, is quite different. His earlier poems suggested that he was suffering from an Apocalyptic interference, but this impression is absent from *Flowers for a Lady* (Routledge, 5s.). Verse comes naturally to him; he says things with an ingenuous directness, and yet has a sensitive poetic observation:—"And out beyond the harbour the sly caves / Chuckle like fireside crones," or, "Now that it is ended and his face grows / Greyer than twilight on a windless sea," or when he likens nervously flickering stars to tears that "pulse in the wind-cold trees." He has a keen perception, too, of the spirit of place, as many of the poems about Ireland reveal, and sometimes he has a quick wit and light touch. The title poem—a cycle of eight elegies—relates the death of his mother to the seasons, and while he asserts little more than the irrevocability of death, the poem is sincerely written and contains some good poetry:—

*How shall I know her then without her voice,  
Her eyes and hair and small impatient hands,  
And all that made her rare, or recognise  
The strangeness of her? Maybe it is true  
That time brings like to like, and love can draw  
Each similar heart into one dwelling place.*

There is something a little Wordsworthian in Alan Rook, and in *We Who*



*Are Fortunate* (Routledge, 5s.). He is steadily working towards a mystique of man's identity with the flowers and trees around him. "All we ask is to flower as the roses flower, / deep in the innermost heart of Rose, for so / from the innermost heart, our deepest creative power, / we shall assume beauty just as the roses do." And he asks us to go, "Straight to the infinitely magic moment / when the acorn splits, the seed stirs and gives birth." Another Wordsworthian similarity is his, at times, almost conversational style, which can yet be so evocative, while, "Our death is too much with us," echoes "The world is too much with us." He is marred by a little undigested Eliot. His belief in the still centre, in which all is resolved and from which new life can spring, is developed interestingly in a long poem, "Green Mountain," in which he pleads that we should lose "our hearts in forms we understand / until we are the wood, the river and the rose," in order to learn with pain and difficulty, "the quintessential nature of freedom."

Routledge have also published an interesting volume of poems by Diana James, *The Tune of Flutes*, written between the ages of 13 and 17, and some of the poems show a remarkable development and a delicate influence of Christina Rossetti. Miss James has a firm control over her verse, and one sonnet in particular is a highly accomplished work.

R. N. Currey (*This Other Planet*—Routledge, 5s.) and Herbert Corby (*Hampdens Going Over*—Editions, PL, 4s. 6d.) are both reporters. The first makes verses of any material on hand; some are moving in their simplicity, but seldom transcend verse-reportage. And one wonders what Mr. Corby will write about when he hasn't got the R.A.F. But he transcribes his experiences vividly, and if and when he widens his scope, his photographic eye should prove useful.

Too briefly, I want to notice a young soldier-poet who doesn't seem to have appeared much in the poetry magazines, but who has jumped into print with a stimulating volume of poems, *Spring Sacrifice* (John Lane, 5s.). He is Donald Thompson, and he writes better than many of his more well-known contemporaries. His assets:—thoughtfulness; having something to say and knowing how to say it forcefully; a strong imagination to clothe his thoughts and feelings effectively; and the impression of having recollected in tranquillity. Example, first stanza of "Poem in Hospital":—

*Bitterness of stone and the coarse caress  
Of sand fashioned us: under the bleak north  
We laced our calcine armour. Come here  
We wonder that a tenderness brings forth  
Snow and gentians in the wilderness.*

Lastly, two 'veterans'—Walter de la Mare and Edith Sitwell. For the former a passing remark must suffice. *The Burning Glass* (Faber, 6s.) is in the main de la Mare tradition, with which you're already familiar, and it would be a waste of space to tell you what you already know. War doesn't always come easily to his verse, but, in the main, it has the same melody. Edith Sitwell's book, *The Song of the Cold* (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.) demands less brief treatment, because it is an advance on her previously published work. It contains her poems of the last five years. The whole tradition of English poetry is inherent in her verse, and all her influence—Rimbaud, Pope, Herrick, Marlowe, to mention four of a long retinue—are no more echoes, but have been woven into the rich fabric of truly great poetry. (And one feels one can be extravagant without fear of contradiction by Time.) The catastrophe of civilization and Death, Miss Sitwell has come to accept as the great renewer, the Winter from which the Spring is born:—"For as

the Sun buries his hot days and rays / To ripen in earth, so the great rays of the heart / Are ripened to wisdom by Death, and great is our forgiveness." It is the lifetime of experimentation which has led to this closely-woven achievement and to unforgettable lines like:—

*For those who build great mornings for the world  
From Edens of lost sight seen in each other's eyes,  
Yet soon must wear no more the light of the Sun,  
But say farewell among the morning sorrows.*

But leaving Miss Sitwell and Mr. de la Mare aside, three names stand out among the young poets this year—Sidney Keyes, Alun Lewis and Vernon Watkins, and only one can continue to enrich English literature. But altogether it has been a year of interesting, often thrilling, and sometimes good poetry, and although this review is inevitably inadequate, I hope it may have given you a few of the coloured strands that are being woven into the fabric of English poetry.

## Edouard Roditi

### THE DIALECTIC OF DAVID AND GOLIATH

*"Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight him:  
for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his  
youth. . . ."*

*And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he  
disdained him. . . .*

*So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with  
a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him; but there was  
no sword in the hand of David.*

—SAMUEL I, 17.

The chief characteristic of the Philistine, as the poet's contrary has often been called by poets and critics, is his sudden insecurity when he finds himself confronted with the unfamiliar phenomena of art, an insecurity analogous only to the dread awareness of mortal combat in which the conscious artist affronts the compromises of the world of business and of bourgeois morals. The Philistine, the bourgeois and the lowbrow are accustomed to evaluating their experiences in terms of immediate expediency: to be valuable, a thing or an experience must be more or less immediately useful, according to the limited standards of money-values, more or less immediately good or expedient according to the standards of moral as opposed to ethical values. But the artist's world, like the pure scientist's or the saint's, is not dominated by these practical or pseudo-ethical considerations: it has no Stock Exchange and no police-force. So the Philistine, with all his weapons and his armor, his dollars and his morals, finds himself handicapped when he is forced to evaluate a work of art in terms of his only standards, which now turn out to be no longer valid.

Suddenly insecure, the Philistine reacts to this insecurity as all neurotics react to theirs: he seeks compensation elsewhere, becomes overbearing, begins to demand of art more, or less, than he does of other phenomena which do not give

him this sense of insecurity. He wants art to solve all his problems or none of them, much as he once expected religion, another imponderable, to relieve him of all the insecurity of thinking by offering him all the answers, or to be a harmlessly useful opiate for the dangerous masses; or also as he expects science to free him from death or from all the petty inconveniences of life, or to provide him with a source of unlimited income.

And thus the Philistine gradually confuses art with religion or with science; and sooner or later he expects art to be solemn, liturgical, mysterious, or factual, informative, didactic. And then he is offended, as if this were blasphemy or charlatanism, when art disappoints him by being flippant, witty, iconoclastic, fanciful, childlike. For art, to the Philistine, must be solemn as High Mass, faithful to formula as the manufacture of aspirin tablets; and if he misses this solemnity in art, or if art fails to live up to these scientific expectations, the Philistine suspects it of charlatanism and protests that he has been fooled, gypped.

\* \* \*

But every age has produced art that, without being solemn, is yet eminently serious. Within the scope and rules of art, as within those of a game, it is possible to play seriously, to be most serious when most playful. Every Philistine will accept the meaning of the phrase: "a serious game of bridge"; he will admit that the rules of the game are a serious matter within the game, even if the game itself is not necessarily a serious matter within a broader context where its rules are no longer applicable.

Art, however, is not always a mere game whose arbitrary rules must be taken seriously only for the duration of the game. Art is often as serious as the Philistine's life, if not more serious. And it is just this ability of art to shift its scope and vary its rules that puzzles the Philistine most. Were art a mere bridge-game, and never anything more serious in terms of the broadest scope of living, the Philistine would never feel insecure as he does: he would become as familiar with the rules of art as he has already become with those of bridge. But the Philistine is horrified when he suddenly discovers that he himself is one of the stakes in the bridge-game of art; and then he resents this flippant gambling with his person, within the rules of a game in which, he believed, he was but a playful gambler, not a stake.

And it is because art can be compared both to a religion—and what could be more serious than religion, than David sent forth by God to accomplish His will?—and to a game—and what could be less serious than a game, than a child playing with a sling?—and again to a science—and what could be more exact than a science, than the ballistics of the expert with his stone and sling?—that the Philistine is resentful, puzzled and insecure. Like the behavioristic rat, he goes berserk in the puzzling and frustrating rat-run of art.

Within the ranks of the artists too, the Philistine will often find many allies. For art is no mere profession, and many a professional artist finds himself involved in something more complex than he was ever prepared to face; the professional artist then, like the Philistine, becomes resentful and overbearing, and tries to reduce art to a religion or a science or their contrary, a mere game, but profitable. And the artists who accept this defeat always find themselves victoriously acclaimed by large numbers of Philistines, of hypocrites who are their equals and their brothers and who find it more profitable to promote a topsyturvy notion of art where they all feel more secure when they proclaim defeat to be victory.

But art is, by nature, both serious and playful, sometimes most serious when most playful, both religion or science and game, both the child's innocent love of

life and the old man's fear of death. When we are afraid of death, there is but one escape from death: a careful but playful refusal to play death's game, the invention of a new set of rules, or of variations on the old rules, so that we may hope to trick or cheat death. The artist thus stakes his life, his immortality, in a game that is most serious and most playful, just as the child also takes his play most seriously, inventing games to reduce his vast anxieties to the level of mere play; but the artist knows better and plays because in play, and in play alone, can he prevaricate.

Art is thus both High Mass or a serious scientific experiment and a good bridge-game. Take a tragedy: within *Oedipus*, a mere play, a lie as Plato would have us admit because its plot is not really being reënacted before the spectator's eyes but only being acted or imitated, the most serious things are happening, things, though they may never actually happen in the spectator's private life, are all more serious, and more relevant to his life, than all his petty tragedies and minor muddles, than the five dollars that he lost yesterday at poker or the tray that his wife dropped, breaking all the china, on her way from the kitchen to the living-room when they hurriedly ate supper before rushing off to the play.

Poor Philistine! He is always being cheated because he himself, in his desire to protect his false security, has set in circulation the false currency of art in which he himself is finally paid. He wanted art to be serious, solemn, like religion, and as non-profitable. Well, he got war-memorials for which he had to pay millions of dollars by public subscription, and Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* that sold profitably as a best-seller, and he got *The Miracle* and *The Rosary*. Again, he wanted art to be a mere game, entertainment and no more, profitable to the artist who, like a faithful employee, delivered the goods cheap and on time. Well, he got Hollywood, gangster-movies and Westerns, and a sharp consequent rise in juvenile delinquency when the devices of entertainment, imitated from those of real life, migrated back from the screen into real life, because art had failed to serve its ethical purpose and had given the kids in the audience no catharsis, only a desire to sling stones like the dead-end kid in the movie. Or again, he wanted art to be factual, like science; and then he got social significance, and an ever uglier political situation when more and more readers became influenced by fiction as they might be by editorials.

But serious art, even when least solemn, can achieve this serious purpose, this catharsis that is to be found in Pope's *Rape of the Lock* or in the *Satyricon* of Petronius but not in *Arsenic and Old Lace* nor in the merely pornographic *Memoirs of a Masseuse*. For the merely entertaining or the merely pornographical, because they do not present their contents artistically, fail to satisfy or purge in us those very passions which they depict in their characters; and they thus inspire us to act as do their characters. But the work of art satisfies, by magic, all these passions, and thus deters the spectator from action. And this is the scientific transmutation or the religious transubstantiation of art, the mystery where the unreal, in the communion of artist and audience, becomes real, where the game becomes therapeutic science or religion; and it is also the experiment where the processes of nature are really reënacted, while it all still remains a game without ever becoming ritual or class-room chemistry. In this communion, the big Philistine is killed and reborn, no longer a Philistine or at least, for a while, a child like his playful killer, until he reverts to his Philistinism, but purged by art or some of it.

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But the Philistine is right, in a way. For the artist, like the saint or the scientist, is an eternal beginner who practices a trade which, he knows, he can



never fully master or understand; whereas the honest Philistine, a lawyer or a wholesale clothier from his youth, thinks he knows all there is to know of his trade. This knowledge, however, is all false, and it is on false knowledge that the Philistine bases his self-respect and his respect of others, all false. For in science or art, as with God, "There is no respect of persons"; and the Philistine, who insists on this respect, must content himself with the false gods of ritualistic religion, the false and profitable medicines of dubious science, and the false art of academies.

## MEXICAN LETTER

We have just returned to the United States after some five years in Mexico, places like Hermosillo, Guadalajara, Colima, Orizaba, Morelia, Vera Cruz and of course Mexico City. Everything coalesces when seen in perspective across the Rio Grande: the day to day existence of the peasant, the restricted life of the middle class, the hardships of the students and working classes, the struggles of native writers and artists for recognition, the presence of foreigners and refugees during the war, the many diverse elements in the people's history, religion, social and cultural relations: it's a complex pattern charged with meanings. As writers, painters and residents of the country, we feel that we have a fairly sizeable impression of the Mexican picture.

In the smaller towns, we found a rather consistent interest in old and contemporary literature, including translations from English, French, German, Russian and Italian. There are club groups (with names like Architrabe) where literature is discussed, and often the local poet or artist is on hand to present his work. Shy, formal meetings every three or four weeks, seemingly without enthusiasm because they are new and strange. But the concept of American literature is no longer founded on the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and the poetry of Longfellow—the talk has swung to Hemingway, Faulkner and Steinbeck, though modern poetry is still confessedly difficult to grasp. Thanks to cheap paper editions available at almost any book shop or street stand, with prices ranging from \$1.50 to \$8.00 (pesos), the reader has access to a large supply of books. Since most families are too hard put to buy books equivalent to our American trade editions, the situation for publishers and authors is not favorable. Argentina continues to print the largest number of books for Mexico and other Latin American countries. However, vanity publications are not infrequent. These cost the author between \$250.00 and \$500.00 (pesos). Attractive editions of poetry, fiction and biography. Often the author is a school teacher or government employee who has saved this money out of his meager salary over a period of years. Always, there is the hope: the book may sell and royalties free him from his job. . . .

Like his European counterpart, the Mexican likes his newspaper broadened by philosophical comment and meaningful discussions of art and the latest poetry. It is not unusual to see the travelling botica salesman nodding over the literary page of his *Informador* or *Excelsior* as the train bumps along. In his pocket is a novel to keep him company at some lonely *casa de huéspedes*.

The outlook for art in the small towns is gloomy. There are no art groups comparable to the literary groups. The sidestreet carpenter makes his cedro reliquary and his primavera madonna; the painter makes billboard signs, decorates the fiesta floats, copies calendar scenes to order—for those who want a picture in the dining room. Sometimes the church commissions a saint or madonna or a mural.

Genuine art is too precarious a field to depend on; without some private income it amounts to starvation. Chances for local exhibitions are out of the question and there are no patrons. So the native artist must cater to local taste and trade and hope for an opportunity to try his luck in the capital. We ran across native artists in only two towns, both young painters of families with some means. One had managed to get an assignment to do wall panels for a well-known restaurant in Guadalajara, with results that show rich imagination. The other is a student whose work is highly impressionistic, with an originality of imagery that promises to take him far. But each views his future as an artist with trepidation, and with good reason. To be introduced into the capital's art circles is not easy; it means winning the sympathy and attention of an important artist or critic or patron or gallery director.

In view of this, it is no wonder that such literary and art colonies as do exist in the remote areas of Mexico are made up of foreigners:—the native talent is conspicuously absent. Let it be some fleck of a village near Chapala or an isolated Pacific barrio or a far corner of Oaxaca or a place on Lake Patzcuaro—you will find a Swede, a Russian, a Swiss, an Englishman or an American, rarely even a visiting Mexican. Out of the country come world discoveries based on Mexican themes and color and line. Memories of the forerunners are still strong: D. H. Lawrence, Hart Crane, Archibald MacLeish, Witter Bynner. . . . Who knows what others may turn up after the war?

But it is in Mexico City that one can measure final achievements. Here the literary groups have lost their shyness and assumed their true Latin temperament. They crowd into a small apartment on the third floor; red serapes hang over the window on the light well; beer bottles and ash trays clutter the sill. The speaker for the evening is from Barcelona; he has made a documentary film of the civil war in Spain, a film that ran two weeks on Broadway; he speaks well, thoughtfully, with accents bred of real background and experience. There's another meeting on Calle x, just off the Paseo de la Reforma; the furniture is Louis XIV; over the cantera doorway is an inscription in Latin; the lecturer is a distinguished poet and author; his subject, *Writers in a Post War World*. Students and reporters meet in the afternoons over coffee at popular cafes; they talk about politics, religion, war novels, new labor policies, the role of Mexico in American affairs, books, plays, ideas.

We met some of the refugee writers like Jules Romain, Jean Malaquais and Victor Serge. Each of these is creating an important work based on his own country. Antonio Barbuda, a talented young Spaniard, is co-editor of the excellent literary review, *El Hijo Prodigio*. His latest book is called *Insight into Spain*. Until his recent trip to New York, Michael Fraenkel was host at literary Saturday evenings in his home. Fraenkel has been able to use his four-year stay in Mexico for a *Mexican Journal*. We read some of the *MS* and found in it the viewpoint of a city man weighing a peasant culture. Regla, who is affiliated with the art magazine, *Dyn*, is a man who goes into the interior to study languages and customs; his absorption in the country is rare.

All in all, the literary picture in Mexico City is an active one. Books get written, sold and widely discussed. But it is the art picture that attracts the greater attention. Of course the blitz of hack work vs real art goes on and on, in spite of the fact that the capital has its art patrons and commercial backers and galleries. As we pointed out, it is difficult for unknown talent to get started. Only a few of the many, who live difficult lives in order to foster their craft, succeed. The rest hang on, against bitter odds. Foreign talent has an easier time of it, possibly because they are fewer in number and have already acquired some reputation. At any rate, it is not uncommon to find several exhibitions of foreign-

ers showing at the galleries, popular meeting places like Inez Amor's Bellas Artes, Misrachi's, Decoracion, El Rancho del Artista, the Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin. Each May, there is an annual exhibit in Chapultepec Park during the flower show. There may be fifteen hundred canvases, with strong provocative work by Irene Tomasic, Martha Adams, Valetta-Swan de Malinowski, Maria Izquierda, Dr. Atl, Miguel Covarrubias, Valdez Pesa—to name but a few.

The exhibitions reveal a Mexico growing in art consciousness. While the era of the great muralists (Rivera, Orozco and Sequierros) is not over, many new influences are coming to the fore. There is much painted for effect but the preponderance of the creative brush is serious. It is an attempt to give us a broader Mexico, the natural world as well as the social: rich landscapes, palmeros, playas, oxen in fields, native dancers, village scenes. It is a slow growth but it should go far because it is not based on any abnormal idealism. In sum, its art may well be the most powerful expression of the Mexican people.

With best wishes to the *Briarcliff*.

Cordially

—PAUL A. BARTLETT

—ELIZABETH R. WINTERS

## THE ENGLISH THEATRE IN 1945

Although the English theatre during the past year can never have been in its history more moribund, on the other hand never before has it known such a boom in entertainment. Again, with the exception of Peter Ustinov, no new playwright (who was not already established before the war) has had his work produced in the West End; nor has any new actor, for that matter, reached in the last five years the stature of a leading player. The causes of such a dearth—amid what to any stranger would seem such apparent prosperity—can quickly be gathered from a few statistics.

In England today there are approximately two hundred and twenty publishers, and most of these publishers, it should be added, are established with offices in London. In 1938 there were approximately seventy repertory theatres in England: today there are just over two hundred such theatres. In London ten managements own all the theatres in the West End: of these ten managements seven are amalgamated, one specializes solely in American productions, and the remaining two are so bureaucratic that, unless the play is "entirely stage-worthy" in manuscript form, it is rejected immediately. No longer can the young dramatist obtain that help which used to be so freely given by actor-managers earlier in this century. The repertory theatres also offer no encouragement, for the most part, to the same dramatist. An ordinary play takes approximately a hundred hours' rehearsal: a play at a weekly repertory theatre is lucky if it is given sixteen hours' rehearsal—and, because of this system, no producer at such a theatre has the time to work out a new play: Instead it is merely a case of the provinces seeing today what London saw yesterday. Yet, despite these signs of sterility, a ring of small theatres in London is beginning to surround the West End; within the West End itself, too, there are signs of life. It is the purpose of this article to examine some of these hopeful omens, and to show that, theatrically speaking, all is not lost—yet.

During the past year both John Gielgud, with his company at the Haymarket Theatre, and the Old Vic Company led by Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson, at the New Theatre, have presented seasons in which it has been possible for a stranger coming to London to see six different plays within the same week. Their repertoires have included: *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, and *Henry IV* (both Parts I and II), by Shakespeare; *Oedipus Tyrannus* by Sophocles (in W. B. Yeats' translation), *The Duchess of Malfi* by Webster, *Love for Love* by Congreve, *The Critic* by Sheridan, *Peer Gynt* by Ibsen (in a new version by Norman Ginsbury), *Uncle Vanya* by Tchekov, *Arms and the Man* by G. B. Shaw and *The Circle* by Somerset Maugham. Donald Wolfitt has also brought his Shakespearean company to London, and within a fortnight played parts as diverse as Shylock, Benedick, Macbeth and Lear. Apart from these repertory seasons in the West End, there have been two new plays of some worth by established playwrights: *The Wind of Heaven*, by Emlyn Williams, and *The First Gentleman*, by Norman Ginsbury. The former in many ways was similar to Jerome K. Jerome's play, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*: however, in this case, the scene was set against the background of the Crimean war, and treated of the conversion of a circus owner from atheism to belief; like all Williams' plays, it had moments both of bathos and pathos, but, taken all in all, it is up till now his most mature work. Ginsbury's work, too, was a considerable improvement on his earlier *Viceroy Sarah*, and, instead of taking the life of the Duchess of Marlborough for his principal subject, he chose George IV, as Prince Regent, for his main character round which to build his play.

The most interesting play produced in the West End has been *The Banbury Nose*, by Peter Ustinov. Based on Kierkegaard's dictum, "life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forwards," the action of the time sequence was reversed, the first act taking place in 1943, and the three succeeding acts in 1920, 1900, and 1884. Lieutenant-General Reginald Hume-Banbury (a somewhat kinder picture of Colonel Blimp than is usually drawn) is presented as the dominating figure of an ancient rambling mansion in Sussex. Two generations are contrasted; the one subservient, whilst the other—epitomised in the grandson—revolts against the traditions that have bound his father. The play, though it had much admirable characterization to commend it, suffered from a certain intolerance in its treatment of old age. Ustinov, so far, has shown more promise than achievement.

As a result of the apathy of most managers in the West End, and excluding those particular seasons and productions already mentioned, there has been a most marked return to the small theatre, with an audience of between one and three hundred people. It has been encouraging at these theatres to find many established actors playing and giving their services for what must be financially little reward. At the Arts Theatre, under the direction of Alec Clunes, there have been plays by Labiche, Gorki and Ibsen; also towards the end of the year a season of drama was put into repertory, including *Hamlet*, *The Constant Couple* by Farquhar, *The School for Scandal* by Sheridan, *The Thunderbolt* by Pinero and *Getting Married* by Bernard Shaw. Basil Ashmore in September started the London Theatre Group, and has since presented *Rosmersholm* by Ibsen, *Exiles* by James Joyce, *The Winter of our Discontent* by Maeterlinck, *Red Horizon*, a new play about the abdication of the Czar, by Osbert Sitwell and R. J. Minney and *Tomorrow Will Be Different* by the Brazilian novelist, Paschoal Carlos Magno. At the Chanticleer Theatre Club, Greta Douglas in the first six months of the year directed *The Provoked Wife* by Vanburgh, a season of lesser known plays of Ibsen, (which included *The Lady from the Sea*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, and *When We Dead Awaken*) and for the first time on the English Stage, two plays,



*Larrissa* and *Wolves and Sheep*, by Ostrovsky, the Russian dramatist of the last century, and Peter Brook's production, *The Infernal Machine*, by Jean Cocteau. A new play, *More Than Science*, by Diana Quirk, was also performed. Its theme was contemporary, and set on the Russian front during the war. It showed the use of plasma injections in the case of those who "apparently" had just been killed, and who, to the peasants, from this point of view, appeared after their recovery "to have come back from the dead." It may be of interest to add here that in fifty cases so treated in October, 1944, twelve recovered completely, twenty-two lived up to three days, and only in two cases did this method meet with no success.

At the somewhat larger Embassy Theatre in Hampstead, Anthony Hawtrey has been pursuing a policy of interspersing revivals with new plays. In fact, so encouraging has been the response, that in December he inaugurated the system of having two different companies playing each evening, one at six o'clock and one at nine. Among the mere outstanding productions of the year, have been *No Room at the Inn* by Joan Temple, dealing with evacuees, and, in this case, their exploitation, and *Myself a Stranger* by Caro and Hugh Burden, which examined the colour bar with relation to the question of intermarriage.

Finally, and perhaps the most ambitious of these projects, has been the beginning of a series of poetic dramas at the Mercury Theatre, under the direction of Robert Speaight and Martin Browne. Their aims have been to recruit the poet back to the stage so that he may lift the action above the merely naturalistic, and its diction above the commonplace. Too long have poetry and drama been divided one from the other, and the object of the season is to bring them together. The opening production was *The Old Man of the Mountains*, by Norman Nicholson: it told the biblical story of Elijah and Ahab in modern terms—the scene being set in Cumberland today. Here are two examples of Nicholson's startling imagery:

. . . let the muscles  
Run up his arms like ferrets . . .

and of an approaching thunderstorm:

. . . the clouds are like bruises

The second play, *This Way to the Tomb!* by Ronald Duncan, was both masque and anti-masque: the masque being dedicated with reverence by the poet to Ben Jonson, and showing the fast made by Saint Anthony of Santa Ferrata; the anti-masque being dedicated with irreverence to the director of television, and in which is seen an Astral group's modern excursion into mysticism. Of such a play the music, which is by Benjamin Britten, is an integral part: in the case of the masque it is scored for a four-part choir, with the original Latin words of Psalm 69; in the case of the anti-masque four hands at a piano with jazz percussion are used, until, at the end, choral music is once more introduced. Since Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* there has been no other poetic drama comparable to it. Phrases such as "the sun drops like a coin into the hands of those who have begged another day," and "Christ lies in my heart like a green leaf in an old book," make the play memorable for its language alone. It is seldom that introspection of the saint has been studied with such an equal degree of spirituality. Hard as it is to do justice to these plays in so brief a survey as this, perhaps this quotation (taken from the second play),

*Autumn's a woman. A woman's a vine  
Carrying the soil's lust into the pressed wine;  
Both blood and the grape, incarnadine*

may show some of the beauty of the verse with which they are charged.

The English theatre is not dead: it still continues to live—even if, in so doing, it is often in outposts somewhat away from the centre of London. It was Matthew Arnold who said, a century ago: "The theatre is irresistible: organize the theatre," and although today the latter qualification may appear to have been forgotten, at least there are signs that for many its appeal is still irresistible.

—NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

## ROSKOLENKO REPLIES

If Mr. Flexmore Hudson is a socialist, that is to his good. Not a Jindy-worobak-Socialist! If he objects to my interpretation of the "Alcheringa" myth, I suspect it is merely a theologian's view he offers up. After all even Ian Mudie (ex-Australia Firster) differs with Rex Ingamells, the founder of the cult. If these two high-priests can present two versions of "Alcheringa," certainly I, a foreigner, can assert a non-native view of the all hallowed "return." Apparently it is everything to every man. As a non-worshipper before the totems of Ingamells mysticism, Hudson nevertheless has a vein of sympathy, as witness the type of poetry he publishes in his magazine, *Poetry*.

Now to Mr. Hudson's objections to the Australian issue of *Voices*. Yes, the most representative poetry was selected, and the widest kind of publicity attended the gathering together of the material. *Meanjin Papers* advertised and asked for contributions, and Mr. Hudson made known, to all and sundry, that Miss Elisabeth Lambert and I were editing this special Australian issue. To say that the issue was not representative is to disavow the following poets who appeared in it: His own Ian Mudie and Rex Ingamells; Shawn O'Leary, whom Mr. Hudson praises as one of the best war-poets; Norma L. Davis, most auspicious, of the flora and fauna school of Tasmania; D. Auchterlonie; J. D. Mackenzie; Rosemary Dobson; Amy Cumpston; Elizabeth Galloway; C. B. Christesen (editor of *Meanjin Papers*); Dorothy Hewett; Wm. Hart Smith, whom Mr. Hudson praises to the Alcheringa skies (the same with Brian Vrepon!); Kershaw; Dutton; Bernard Smith; Elisabeth Lambert; and the much objected to, Ern Malley, who insists on living despite the many wounds and deaths suffered from the pens of philistines, mayhem-experts, obfuscators, axe-grinders and teeth chatterers. Mr. Hudson's two other poets, Kenneth Slessor and John Quinn, failed to come along after invitations. Mr. Slessor promised; but when the grog gave out, no poems turned up. Fair go, mate, stay off the wattle!

Mr. Hudson answers, in part, the objections of R. G. Howarth regarding the Chair of Australian Literature, which apparently has only a temporary basis and is missing a leg. Sorry, old chap. I was trying to make an assist but the other team shouted me down. As to the "pedantic" business and the "many Yank soldiers" writing for *Southerly*. There were a few, kind sir; even if one must make the now insufferable, Karl Jay Shapiro, a few Yanks. I do not have back-numbers of *Southerly* for analysis, but a pedant is a scholarly bloke who makes an ostentatious display of his learning, or simply pursues knowledge for his own sake. Okay? *Southerly* is scholarly, which you will certainly not deny, and pedants do find their way into its pages, for *Southerly's* sake.

—HARRY ROSKOLENKO

# BOOKS

## TIME IS RUNNING OUT

*Modern Man Is Obsolete.* By Norman Cousins. New York: The Viking Press. \$1.

In summary Norman Cousins' argument is this: In all recorded history there have been only three hundred years in total during which the world was free of war. But human nature does not necessarily make war inevitable. Man is capable of great and fundamental change. The atom bomb makes the abolition of war imperative to survival. Atomic energy and other scientific achievements can now free man from the necessity of amoral struggle for wealth, power, and security. Man need not continue to be a viciously competitive animal.

All modern institutions and human relationships have become obsolete. There is a wide gap between technology and "spiritual" evolution, between cosmic gadgets and human wisdom, between intellect and conscience, between science and morals. With all our capacity to change, we lack the will to effect the social changes necessary to a peaceful and progressive world. Will the dramatic threat of total destruction embodied in the atom bomb impel us to substitute cooperation for savagely competitive relations between individuals, social classes, and nations? Will this marvelous and terrible weapon force us to emancipate ourselves from poverty, from the age-old struggle for national aggrandizement, from the use of war as an instrument of national policy?

We are faced with the problems of the Atomic Age before we have solved any of the basic problems and conflicts of the age of electricity and steam. Scientific and technological achievements before August 6, 1945, could have given the entire world a far higher standard of living, peace, and security, instead of a series of wars, and poverty for most of the earth's millions. The social, political, economic, and cultural institutions prevailing in 1939 were far from free of the traditions existing before the Industrial Revolution. Most countries suffered from the persistence of feudalism, for example. Man's brain has pierced atoms but is baffled by the common cold. There is no good reason any man on earth should not have plenty to eat. There is no excuse for illiteracy. Civilization is threatened because modern man remains only half-civilized, even in the most advanced countries.

We have been world warriors; it is time to become world citizens. This is not idealism, but a driving necessity for self-preservation. Even in 1939 absolute national sovereignty was an obsolete anomalous hold-over from feudalism. Yet even after the atom bomb the governments of the Big Three talk as though each sovereign state could act as it did two thousand years ago. Security is no longer to be found in gigantic armies and navies and strategic frontiers and alliances and power politics. When other nations possess the atomic bomb, each country will be at the mercy of other countries. Boundaries between nations, even wide oceans, are no protection. They are as obsolete as the Maginot Line and the pre-war battleship.

The ancient struggle between Athens and Sparta, growing out of the inability of the Greek states to get together in a single government, cost Greek civilization its very life. We are similarly threatened today on a world scale. The antipathies and rivalries between nations today are as stupid as those between the American states which finally sank their differences in a common sovereignty, creating

the United States. The world today is smaller than the area encompassed by the thirteen American colonies—a trip from New York to Chungking takes less time than from New York to Philadelphia in 1787, and all the peoples of all the world are within hearing-distance of a New York radio. You can now be killed by an atom bomb from across the ocean, and there is no effective defense possible.

The United Nations Charter has also become an antiquated instrument for preventing war, based as it is on national sovereignty. *Time is running out.* Victory and possession of the atom bomb and the skeleton of the UNO do not give us a real respite, nor time in which to build the UNO into a genuine structure of a world federation.

World government cannot dissolve the differences between peoples and nations; but it can and must adjust these differences, keep them from dissolving civilization. The first purpose of law and of government is to settle disputes peacefully.

Action should be taken which is appropriate to the immediacy and enormity of the peril. Not another conference of the Big Five, but a Constitutional Convention of all the nations of the world, large and small, to design a real federation under which every power would surrender its absolute sovereignty, as the American states surrendered their sovereignty to the federal government. This world government would be no guarantee of peace—there might be another war as there was between the states—but it might give us time to solve the conflicts that lead to war. It might mean world tyranny, for great power must be given it to enforce international law, to outlaw the use of the atom bomb. But the risk must be taken—the alternative is the certainty of an atomic war.

Such is the moving appeal made by Norman Cousins, the best among many appeals for world government *now*. "Brave words, bravely spoken," commented fellow-traveling Bennett Cerf. Brave words, indeed, but perhaps a bit obsolete. Every intelligent politically-minded person on earth realizes that the UNO is inadequate, that a democratic federation of the nations is imperative to avert the impending World War III. But the only words which can match the pace of atomic research are words telling us *how*—not merely why—world government can be achieved.

Mr. Cousins proposed, and I applaud the proposition, to call a Constitutional Convention to establish a world government. But everyone knows that it would follow the pattern of the San Francisco and London parleys, resulting in stalemate, and for the same reasons. In the months since Hiroshima was bombed, and since *Modern Man Is Obsolete* was written, no single important postwar problem has been solved. There has been nothing upon which can be based a solid hope for the substitution of cooperation for international chaos and conflict and power politics.

The political world has not been changed by the atom bomb. Neither social classes nor nations have learned to compromise and collaborate for mutual welfare. The fear of war and ruin has not served to compel men to change their ways. The same conflicts persist and men resort to the same old means.

We need to face, not only the menace of destruction by the atom bomb and the necessity for world government, but the difficulties in the way. An objective analysis will prove that the major obstructions to real international collaboration are presently the insistence of Moscow on the veto power in the UNO, the refusal of Stalin and Molotov to compromise, the unilateral action of Russia in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Middle East, and in the Far East; British, American, French, and Dutch imperialism, and the existence of Fascist dictatorships such as those of Spain, Portugal, and Argentina.

Both the strength and the weakness of Norman Cousins' superb appeal to



the conscience and intelligence of the world lies in his refusal to face practical facts. He admits the enormous complexities of the problems, but he does not attempt to analyze them and seek a way to overcome the obstacles to World government. All that he says is this—we must find the way to cooperation or we will drift toward destruction via the atom bomb. He says it well. And despite my skepticism, I am enthusiastically in favor of his proposal to call a world Constitutional Convention of all nations. If it fails we will know why, we will know what powers still insist on absolute national sovereignty and persist in the obsolete methods of power politics to achieve security through territorial and ideological conquest.

And it is just possible that it might not fail. . . .

—LISTON M. OAK

## TWO FACETS OF "ANGST"

*Little Friend.* By Randall Jarrell. New York: The Dial Press. \$2.00.

*The Unquiet Grave.* By Cyril Connolly. New York: Harper and Brothers. \$2.50.

Randall Jarrell moves in a narrow circle with savage intensity. His master-terms are semi-Freudian, semi-existentialist; and his constant preoccupation with ignoble death endows his verse with an obsessive quality, which is reinforced by a controlled yet vehement rhetoric. The sole theme of these poems is man's progress from prison to prison; that is, from the beneficent prison of the womb to the malign prison of the state and its institutions, and thence to the prison of war. Death releases the prisoner at last, but the act of dying itself is just another step in a series of defilements and humiliations inflicted upon the helpless individual. Such a view amounts to a rejection of life and death alike, for both are characterized by the same constrictions. "From my mother's womb I fell into the State" says the dead ball turret gunner, in a metonymy which identifies the State with his airplane. Once "hunched in its belly" he does not have a chance; mechanical powers carry him into the thick flak and he dies as pointlessly as he has lived.

Since the embryo in the womb is already haunted by its scattered dust there is little scope left for an intelligent evaluation of the contradictions inherent in adult life. Man becomes the trapped animal whose live features gradually harden into a death mask. By a questionable literary device, the poet often assumes that death mask to address through it the living or, rather, the living dead.

Mr. Jarrell's narrow intensity evokes certain aspects of our civilization with singular power, while it neglects others altogether. His life in a training branch of the Air Corps has furnished him with a perfect frame of reference for his theme. In combat, futility may be counterbalanced by a sense of purpose. The majority of his casualties are defeated not by the enemy but by fog or engine trouble; their death is caused by a flaw in the very system they have spent months in perfecting. To most of us these men are merely victims of "occupational hazards"; to Mr. Jarrell they are men who have completed an assigned mission. Their mission was to fail, and in this they have succeeded.

Stylistically these pieces mark an advance over Jarrell's earlier poems. As I have said, his rhetoric is controlled on the whole, but structural weaknesses appear here and there, together with redundancies and harsh transitions. Many of his jolts and jars are no doubt deliberate, but there are times when whole sequences read like violent, ill-assembled prose. Moreover, his constant reiteration of certain key-terms (blood, death, burn) results in monotony and even triteness.



E BY THE WINDOW

Arthur Emptage



MARTHA GRAHAM in **Deep Song**

(Photograph by Barbara Mo  
(Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, Dance Arch

That he can write powerfully is shown by a number of pieces in this book, cf. "A Front," "The Metamorphoses," and that sinister satire, "The State." Besides, each of the longer and not wholly successful poems contains excellent descriptive passages.

Mr. Jarrell's future as a poet will depend on his ability to come to terms with his implacable universe.

*Remember what you learned then: that you are powerless  
Except to know that you are powerless, to learn  
Your use and your rejection, all that is destroying you—  
And to accept it: the difficult resolution.*

So far he does not seem to have succeeded very well, for the tenor of his poems is purely negative; so much so that the mere mention of acceptance strikes a discordant note in an otherwise perfectly orchestrated gloom.

To pass from Mr. Jarrell to Mr. Connolly is like passing from Hell to Purgatory. Though Mr. Connolly is in many ways the obverse of Mr. Jarrell (a civilian, an Englishman, and a polished *homme de lettres*) he starts from almost identical premises. Connolly too has fallen under the spell of Freud and Kierkegaard, and their great predecessors: Pascal, Baudelaire, Leopardi. But where Jarrell acts as the spokesman for his fellow victims, Connolly is concerned only with his private tragedy. In fact, he seems a little proud of standing apart; his despair has a scholarly ring, and we should search vainly in his work for sympathies comparable to Jarrell's compassion for the average conscript.

Still, there remains the identical point of departure: a desire to escape from contemporary reality, to be re-absorbed by the womb. The symbol of the womb is made to include the heroic and pastoral stages of history: "The mind has its own womb to which, baffled by speculation, it longs to return; the womb of Homer and Herodotus . . ."

Mr. Connolly considers himself neither abused nor taken advantage of, but he does not know what spiritual means would really avail him. He too speaks through the mask of a dead man; his *alter ego* is Palinurus, Aeneas' pilot, who fell overboard in his sleep and perished. Palinurus is seen as the prototype of ineffectual man; through no tangible fault of his own he had abandoned the helm of his ship and paid with death for his dereliction.

Though the guilt be intangible, it is nevertheless real and the individual is charged with full responsibility. In a series of illuminating statements Mr. Connolly examines the numerous neuroses and sub-conscious flaws which have led the modern intellectual to a complete divorce from action. But then doubt sets in. Is inaction necessarily punishable? The example of Palinurus would prove it to be, yet on the other hand we have the medieval mystics and the Taoists, who not only managed to survive in isolation but also drew their main strength from it. Perhaps the *vita contemplativa* is the answer after all, provided we are able to produce abiding masterpieces? Mr. Connolly plies desperately back and forth between the two poles, without even approaching a solution fit for his temperament. Nor do the illustrious examples of Chamfort, Baudelaire *et al.* help him in his predicament. Each of these men had to work out his own salvation, and most of them found themselves not saved but damned in the end.

The main value of this commonplace book resides in the author's superb analysis and presentation of neurotic fear, *angst* and ennui. Intensely introspective, he belongs in the line of the great French moralists he so lovingly quotes. His little work is a remarkable addition to the canon of western self-investigation.

—FRANCIS C. GOLFFING



## TWO ANTHOLOGIES OF MID-AMERICA

*Mid Country*. Edited by Lowry C. Wimberly with an introduction by B. A. Botkin. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. \$3.50.

*America Is West*. Edited by John T. Flanagan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. \$3.75.

Two large anthologies have appeared within recent months, both portraying through literary pieces of various descriptions the characteristics of that part of the United States which lies between the eastern and the western mountains. To a certain extent they are competitors for public interest but not so much as the bare subject matter would suggest; they appeal to such different ways of thinking that they may be said to be playing opposite sides of the street.

*Mid Country* is subtitled "Writings from the heart of America." Mr. Botkin's introduction defines "mid country" as including everything from the Appalachians to the Rockies and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf. In the course of the book, bits from Nevada, California and the Northwest timber country are thrown in. This American "heart" is reasonably capacious—so much so as to suggest the question whether the heart of so various a land as America can be defined with prosaic accuracy. But, as will be explained shortly, *Mid Country* is not a prosaic book, in intention or in effect.

Mr. Botkin further remarks that the vast region under his and the editor's view is full of varieties and contrasts. This is obvious enough. The more difficult and at the same time essential task is, to show what, in spite of the contrasts, makes this vast mid-country one region. That this task has been well accomplished, the reader will see; though the unity is a matter of suggestion rather than definition. The imaginative and sensitive spirit, looking into men's inward thoughts, finds resemblances that may be more important than the differences which cold fact points out. Mr. Wimberly may be said to have brought imagination and sensitiveness to his task.

This book is made up of pieces from many regional magazines. Some of the selections have since appeared elsewhere, but their original place of printing means a good deal. The smaller, less commercial magazines which have appeared and still appear in places remote from the great publication centers have been the repository of human records—studies of men and women and nature inside small environmental ranges, studies made with insight into the minute responses of individuals whose natures have not been sophisticated, either for good or bad, by long contact with the nation's broader culture. People who live in terms of what is right around them, or who can deeply sympathize with that immediate surrounding, are material for the poetical writer in lyric, story, or true sketch. Out of such human data have the pieces in *Mid Country* been written.

The table of contents includes some celebrated names—among them Mark Van Doren, Erskine Caldwell, Edgar Lee Masters, Robert Frost. But it is a tribute to the quality of the book that the pieces by the famous names do not overshadow the rest. The short stories, sketches and verses that make up the contents maintain a standard that makes one admire the richness of talent uncovered by the regional magazines.

The tone of this anthology being what it is, it is not surprising that accounts of life in cities would be largely omitted. As a matter of fact, though Kansas City is celebrated in a glowing sonnet by John Gould Fletcher, the cities of mid-America are practically ignored. Nor is this omission a serious damage to the book. The life of a big city tends to be not so much the life of a region

as a complex life made up of elements from everywhere. A lifetime resident of Chicago would probably feel more at home in New York than in many rural spots in Illinois. With this standardized life the anthologist before us is simply not concerned. And why should he be?

Nevertheless the cities of the middle country have meant a great deal to the regions around them, sometimes to the whole United States, and a more comprehensive anthology would surely not omit them. Such an anthology is provided in John T. Flanagan's *America Is West*. Mr. Flanagan is as devoted to the great mid-country as is Mr. Wimberly, but his devotion finds a perhaps cooler expression. Pursuing a sound but not unexpected logic, he covers the large elements, past and present, that have gone into the making of the whole actuality of the Middle West. First calling upon Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Jackson Turner to explain what the Middle West is, he brings forth a series of selections divided under the headings of folklore and legend, the Indian, explorer and traveler, the frontier, the woods, the farm, the river, the small town, the city, Middlewesterners, and finally interpretations. These headings are certainly enough to permit of giving an extremely broad and varied view of what the Middle West was in the beginning and the numerous things it has been since. The range of subjects calls for an equally large range of authors, and the anthology draws on such celebrated old-time interpreters of American life as Mark Twain, Edward Eggleston and Joseph Kirkland, besides such noteworthy moderns as Ring Lardner, James T. Farrell, John Dos Passos—to name only a few.

In total effect this anthology is quite as good as the other. It would, let us say, be more widely instructive to a foreigner. It is a more useful source book, because of its range of topics. Yet this reviewer hesitates to say that it is a better anthology. It has carried out its purpose very well, but so has *Mid Country*, and both purposes are laudable. Therefore the reader will do well to read both books, and he will find that, as to the effects produced, there is little duplication.

—H. W. TAYLOR

## CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

*Prater Violet*. By Christopher Isherwood. New York: Random House. \$2.00.

This short novel by the author of *Goodbye to Berlin* is a story of the making of a commercial motion picture in London in 1933-1934. It is also the story of the friendship between Dr. Friedrich Bergmann, a well-known Viennese director and Isherwood, the author, on his first assignment as a script writer. While these men squander their talents on an undistinguished story, the Reichstag Fire Trial concludes; the February Social Democrat uprising in Austria is ruthlessly suppressed; Fascism continues to consolidate its power in Germany. Their associates at the Imperial Bulldog Studio ignore these intimations of future world tragedy, and the temperamental Bergmann and the unobtrusive Isherwood are brought together for a time as father and son in common fear and understanding. After many difficulties, *Prater Violet* is released and received with considerable acclaim; Bergmann, the opportunist, "the exile, the perpetual stranger" leaves for Hollywood.

Isherwood has been a script writer for Gaumont-British and for MGM; his picture of life in a large motion picture studio is exact and real. His narrative skill and gift for characterization have never been more apparent than in *Prater Violet*. His magnificent dialogue, terse, witty, natural, reveals as if by magic unsuspected details of the personality of his characters. Bergmann, a

highly-charged, voluble person, is both attracted and repelled by the job which financial and political insecurity have forced him to accept. Chatsworth, the truly vulgar master producer, ingeniously manipulates men who are his superiors in education and culture.

The common criticism that the writing of Isherwood is indistinguishable in style from that of several of his contemporaries, such as Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Orwell, is less valid in considering *Prater Violet* than in *Goodbye to Berlin* or *The Last of Mr. Norris*. Isherwood no longer stands completely on the sidelines as a colorless narrator; he takes a positive role—he is now more deeply concerned with his survival as an individual than as a microscopic part of a dozen social movements which are going on around him. The righteousness of this point of view of course depends upon one's beliefs as to the ideal ends of human actions, but the continued revelation of Isherwood as a personality and as an artist will be an important contribution to the thought and literature of our time.

—HERBERT CAHOON

## THE FOURTH EDITION

*Our Inner Conflicts*. By Karen Horney. New York: W. W. Norton. \$3.00.

Of the current psychoanalytical writers, Karen Horney is the one most likely to succeed in becoming a secular priestess. This is not entirely of her own doing; the circles who will make her one are not really under her control, nor entirely under their own. Two things about her writing, however, help us to understand her popularity and the intensity of her following: her lucid style and her generous optimism about the fate of the modern individual.

The lucid style is due, in large part I think, to her clear thinking. The optimism, however, is based upon a little intellectual trick. She translates most of the troubles of man into conflicts within his individual self and, with maddening reasonableness, promptly solves them.

The modern reader is somewhat unnerved by her calm assurance in the face of the psychic horrors created by life under contemporary dispensations. In reading the present book one is occasionally reminded of the *New Yorker* cartoon of a bewildered analyst and an earnest little man, sitting across the desk from one another, the analyst saying, "Perhaps you just think you're imagining these things."

It is true that Karen Horney sees inner conflicts as resulting from conflicts in human relations, but she does not lay bare the structure of these relations within the larger social framework of modern capitalism. As her books have come out—this is the Fourth Edition—her original drive to disclose the larger social causes of neuroses has diminished. It is for this reason, and because of the repetitions contained in her work, that *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* remains Dr. Horney's best book.

In the latest model of the Horneyan world, people move toward or against or away from other people. They become entangled in conflicts within themselves arising from one or the other of these three orientations: they are compliant (Christians), aggressive (businessmen) or detached (intellectuals). They develop

cover-ups for these basic orientations and lose such centers of gravity as they may have had in their happier, earlier periods.

To be saved by the new glad tidings which Dr. Horney presents, they have to undergo a change from within; and they have also to change their philosophies of life.

The phenomenon of Horney, and her statement of her philosophical relations, indicates that contemporary psychoanalysis is not only a theory about character and neuroses and a therapeutic technique; it is also an ethical philosophy. The modern stress upon the philosophical aspect has done much to humanize and simplify the doctrine. It has also opened it up for lay criticism.

The ethics underlying the doctrine have been disguised in several ways, two of which are the most significant for the history of the school. (a) The writer attempts to show that the ethical choices he would impose upon his patients and readers have biological roots in the patient. He thus can pretend to himself and to his public that he is simply releasing the patient to live out his true self (Reich is an example). (b) The second disguise is more subtle. It can be read between the lines of Horney's works, in such phrases as "spontaneity" and "happiness." It stems from 19th Century idealist philosophies of freedom and it has entered psychologies of quite varied schools.

Both of these disguises of ethical values are "metaphysical" in that they seize upon certain attitudes and conduct patterns and call them the *real* ones which express the *real* self of the patient. I do not believe that such disguises of value choices interfere with successful therapy; on the contrary, I think they are necessary to a great deal of therapy in the atomic period in which we live. It is Horney's assurance, resting upon her metaphysical rationale, which gets her over so big with a large public.

From this general point of view, the present book is revealing. But if you have read *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, you do not really need to read *Our Inner Conflicts*.

—C. WRIGHT MILLS

*Days and Nights*. By Konstantine Simonov. New York: Simon and Schuster. \$2.75.

Konstantine Simonov, young war correspondent of the Soviet Union, has written a war correspondent's novel. This fact gives the experienced reader a synopsis of what to expect. He shows adventure, yes, the adventure that thrills all non-combatants in that strange world of kill or be killed of war. The enemy has that ghostly quality which narrows the perspective of the war correspondent, because he has no contact with them. Of course this handicap does not hamper a good novelist and is a fault corrected by experience. When, however, the characters who are handled take on this same shadowy substance, one begins to feel their unreality more acutely. Too seldom does the reader feel that identification with the emotions and behavior of Captain Saburov which the master craftsman would make possible.

Captain Saburov takes his company, a suicide holding squad, into Stalingrad. Their troubles start when the boat carrying them across the Volga to Stalingrad is sunk by enemy action. From there on we follow the little band into a night attack which takes three apartment houses in the line. The rest of the book is concerned with holding operations, wherein we watch the small company become impossibly thinned out. A lack of relief is due to regrouping operations on the



other side of the Volga which finally result in that magnificent counter attack which marks the turning point in the war. In between are seen the troubles of a company commander. There is an almost ethereal love affair between the captain and the nurse, which adds little to the stature of literary love in war or out.

The Soviet common soldier has little definition. The reviewer consulted an ex-sergeant in the Army of the United States, who had read the book and liked it, on this point. He thought it over and admitted that he had never met soldiers who had behaved like this, and he had trained thousands. Quickly he added that he thought it a "darn good book," nevertheless. And it is "a darn good book." There are flashes of penetration and a foreshadowing of Simonov's future status as a writer. There is every reason to expect that Simonov will progress to the creation of well-rounded characters and situations, which mark the mature artist.

—CHARLES W. CHURCHILL

*La Vie Est Clandestine.* By Alain Bosquet. Paris: Corrêa. No price.

*La Vie Est Clandestine*—Life is Clandestine—is the title of Alain Bosquet's fourth and most recent collection of poems. I should like to give this collection another title reminiscent of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*: *Fleurs de la Guerre*. This is a new species of flower that grew in all the countries affected by the war. They all grew from a soil torn by bombs; they all smell of blood and gun powder. But they are flowers because they possess the main attribute of flowers: they are beautiful, hideously, atrociously, desperately beautiful. And although they exhale Death, they glorify Life, Life which is hidden in their calyx, hidden behind the guns and the planes, hidden and forbidden, but still there.

Poet, it is no longer the time of chrysanthemums  
which descend from the blue . . .  
Your knife is no longer going to cut laurels but  
human throats . . .  
Poet, you are not entitled to life if you interfere  
with death;  
You haven't the right to breathe unless you conquer  
deflagration;  
You haven't the right to the water unless you appease  
the storm . . .

All these *no's* make the chrysanthemums stand out more exuberantly, make the laurels more glorious, life more desirable, breath more salutary, the water more refreshing. The abnegation of life is a powerful affirmation of its beauty. Life is clandestine, life is forbidden, but ever since the forbidden apple tree of Paradise nothing appears to us so attractive as forbidden joy. Liberty doesn't mean as much to anyone as to the prisoner; life is never more beautiful than on the threshold of death. In the magnificent defiance of the convicted, in his determination to die without saying a word, in a contemptuous silence, without crying out loud, "*Vive la France! Vive la Liberté!*" we do not feel the philosophic resignation of Vigny's "*Wolf*" but a youthful effort to appear courageous when the teeth chatter from fear, a reckless bravery that pledges with clenched fists: "I am going to suffer this death, even if I die of it!" He is going to endure it, but he is afraid of it. When he calls upon Charles Péguy and Guillaume Apollinaire, the two great hero poets of World War I, to die with him once more, it means that he needs

assistance to accomplish this difficult job. This emphatic determination to die emphasizes his tremendous attachment to life.

*Paris sur Exil, Paris sur Absence* is still the Ville Lumière and the more its lights are dimmed, the more its past and its future are illuminated. Imagination takes the place of reality and casts over all that is cherished the embellishing reflection of the unreachable.

And, of course, in the spasm of death everything is overdimly envisioned, love as well as hatred. This is no time for English understatement. Bosquet's poems swell of exaggerations, especially when it comes to hating the Germans.

*Viendra le temps . . . The time will come . . . nous vous écorcherons vifs et votre peau servira de tapisserie dans nos messes solennelles; de vos vertèbres enfilées nous ferons des bracelets pour nos servants; vos filles, nous les donnerons à déflorer à nos bouledogues. . . .*

This sounds like an echo of Hitler's roaring voice when he foamed over the radio his threat to the Jews of the world: "They will be exterminated!"

But there is a difference, and we all agree, it is a considerable one. In poetry this juvenile and pitiless impetus adds only a special key to the stormy music of Bosquet's poems, whereas in the mouth of a dictator who has the power of fulfilling his threat it is a menace to the world.

Bosquet likes big words. To a Baudelairian extent he desires to *épater les bourgeois*. He offers the liberating soldiers *our tender daughters to soften their heavy hands, to flatter their amazed lips*. He offers them *our crucifixes to be used as sticks, our holy-water founts to become spittoons when their mouths are filled with dust*.

These poems were born in a pathetic world; it is not surprising that they are overpathetic. Their pathos is reminiscent of Corneille. Corneille cannot and could not be appreciated by a peace-time society. As school girls before 1914 we smiled over his heroic theater and in the struggle between duty and passion we rather preferred passion to be victorious, as in Racine's dramas. But they didn't laugh at Corneille, those Frenchmen whose mothers and sisters were bombed by the Allied Liberating Forces more than they ever were by the Germans, when they imagined their beloved women praying at the approach of the army of liberation: "*Lord, let them [the Liberators] destroy our houses that the barbarians [Germans] may die of the sting of rain . . . Lord, let them break to pieces our beds . . . Lord, let them disperse our herds. . . . Lord, let them shoot at us. . . . Lord, let them have at our expense a lesson of carnage. . . . because all this will finally enable them to destroy the enemy.*"

What a theme for a new Corneille! This new Corneille, as far as I know, has not yet arrived to exploit this theme dramatically. But Alain Bosquet knew how to exploit it poetically. "*The Prière des Français pour les Français venus les délivrer*" is one of the most beautiful poems of *La Vie Est Clandestine*.

Life is clandestine, life is suspended for the duration, but the day will come when "the flood of destruction will yield to the waterlilies." The War-Flowers will yield to the Olive Branches.

*La Tour sera joyeuse ainsi qu'une girafe à qui l'on  
porte des arbres à brouter,  
Le moulin tournera plus vite qu'un disque de musique  
folle,  
et les vignes sur la Butte donneront des pommes  
mauves, des pommes de luxure.  
Notre-Dame Bonne Nouvelle, Paris va vivre!*

"Everything is not so tragic,"

*puisqu'il y a le vent si doux que même les  
soupirs y sont joyeux  
puisqu'il y a tout ce qui possède l'immense  
plaisir d'être vivant.*

At the present time Alain Bosquet is enjoying in Belgium as a soldier of the American Army of Occupation *the immense pleasure of being alive*. It is quite a story how Alain Bosquet returned to Belgium, his native land, as an American soldier. He started to fight this war as a Belgian, in the Belgian Army; he escaped after Dunkerque, and entered the French Army. After the *débauche* he managed to flee to Africa, was sent from there to America, became an American citizen, and has been taken into the American Army and assigned to Belgium.

We could call Alain Bosquet "the Belgian Aragon" or, in my opinion, we would do better justice to him if we called Aragon "the French Bosquet."

—LILI GONDA

*The White Rock*. By Denys Val Baker. London: Sylvan Press. 9s. 6d.

In these days of ardent political theorists, passionate moralists, and inarticulate mystics, hardly a novel is written that hasn't some ulterior significance, and indeed who doesn't deplore the reader who goes to a book solely for entertainment? But I become impatient so soon as I detect an ulterior significance that is not directly related to the work of art itself. I demand of a novelist not that he should grind an axe, no matter how gleamingly fine is the edge, but that he should write a work that is artistically and aesthetically a unity, and that, in doing so, he should have made me more aware of truths which he has more clearly perceived, and should have enlarged my total experience in relation to all that is capable of experience in the universe. It is a mark not only of Mr. Val Baker's artistic integrity but also of his consummate literary skill, when I say that, within the limits he imposes, he does this. *The White Rock* is a distinctive first novel—a remarkable book.

The story is set on the coast of North Wales, in the shadow of the Snowdon mountains, and tells of the conflict of affection of the boy Powys for his father and for his schizophrenic sister, Margiad. Margiad is fanatically devoted to her dead mother, and slowly she tries to poison Powys's mind against his father. The white rock is a haven which her disordered mind projects into the ocean, and on which she believes her mother is waiting for her. Margiad meets her death in trying to swim to this vision in her mind, and such is her power over Powys that he almost suffers the same fate. The way Mr. Baker builds up the power of the sister, and the way he conveys the terrible tension that exists between father, son and daughter, and combines it with the uncanny influence of the death mother, manifesting itself through Margiad, is almost unbearable, and is a masterly accomplishment.

In the end, father and son are reconciled. It is a happy ending; the alternative would have spoilt the book, but it is a happiness set against the greater tragedy of the father's life, and in this tragedy the author has projected, with sensitive perception, the strange irrational conflicts to which chance occurrences make children so prone, and, in portraying the possible ramifications of these conflicts, has increased at least my own vision into childhood and into human nature.

Mr. Baker is well-known to us in England as the editor of a series of distinctive anthologies, but this book establishes him as a novelist of unusual power whose influence on English letters is, I think, bound to be felt.

—HARDIMAN SCOTT

# HISTORY

Eugene D. Heil

## RETREAT IN CORSICA

There were five men and one second lieutenant aboard the C47 transport plane. We were on our way to Corsica after having finished two months of work on new airfields for medium bombers in Sardinia. It was the day after Christmas, 1943, and we had all expected to spend a three day holiday with an Italian family we had met in one of the small towns on the island. Instead, orders came when we least expected them, as they usually do in the army, to proceed to the island of Corsica without delay. So we packed our meager belongings and loaded them along with our jeep, and our trailer, and the lieutenant's motorcycle and personal luggage on a plane. We climbed into another ship and took off.

The trip was getting rough as we approached the mountainous coast of Corsica. We were all slightly apprehensive, for we were to be among the first American troops on the island, and we had no idea how the natives would treat us. It was growing dark as we began to lose altitude, and we could see the dimmed lights of a nearby town as we approached the landing strip. The runway was rather short and it must have been a difficult landing for the pilot, but we were on solid ground again and praising Allah, in the approved "A-rab" fashion, for our safe journey. The first thing that impressed us was the lack of Arabs. Our last encounter with the French in Africa had left some not so fond memories of their colonial citizens. But this was different. Those of us who thought we knew the French language even noticed a different accent. We learned later that it wasn't the accent but the language that was different. They speak a language peculiar to the island, in addition to French and Italian. After waiting an hour for our other plane to come in, we learned that it wouldn't arrive that night, so some R.A.F. "chaps" furnished us with food and a tent until morning. When our supply plane arrived with the sun in the morning, we loaded the trailer, packed ourselves tightly in the jeep, and started off for the mountains. We were hoping to reach our destination, on the other side of the island by nightfall.

The trip was certainly eventful, with scenery like that of a Travelogue. Snow, the first we had seen in our year overseas, covered the crests of the mountains and melted into clear swift streams that raced by the side of the road, under ancient stone arched bridges, and plunged down into dark gorges that the sun couldn't reach. There were few villages along the way. Those that we did see appeared suddenly as we turned a sharp corner, and disappeared almost as quickly as we climbed another mountain. The only thing that kept the old stone houses from appearing deserted was the smoke curling from each chimney. And only once did I see any people in the towns. A group of women were getting water at a fountain. Some had stopped to converse and hadn't bothered to take the heavy stone jugs off their heads. By noon we were in the center of a dense forest of massive pines. We had passed what appeared to be a resort town, a cluster of log buildings resembling Swiss chalets. We discovered later



that it was a hunting retreat used mainly by Englishmen, who used to migrate there before the war to hunt wild boar. We had all become so engrossed in the scenery that we hadn't realized that we were lost, until the chief suggested that we stop to decode our French road map. We stopped on the slope of one of the highest mountains in the range. From there we could see the other side of the island, the Tyrrhenian sea and the isle of Monte Cristo, not far off shore. After a conference over the map, a bit of hot coffee, and some "chow," we were off again down the mountains.

We rolled into the little coastal town of Ghisonaccia after dark, met the major and some British "brass" we were to report to, and then "hit the sack." We felt we were cut off from the world, in exile so to speak, for the English officer had told us that the road we came in on, when it was open, was the only possible way to get into town. We had been fortunate for the road was only open two hours a day, because of landslides. The coast road was impassable as all the bridges had been demolished by the Germans. The next morning, apparently with that thought in mind, our chief asked us to look over a possible airfield site near a little town thirty kilometers south on the coast road. Because a native informed us that the railroad bridges were still intact the last time he had been in that direction, we rode the rails in our jeep to the village of Travo.

To call that group of houses a village would be an insult to the other villages of the island. Actually, it consisted of five houses and a church. The houses had their backs to the mountains and faced a flat, thinly wooded area that sloped to the sea, half a mile away. As we were unable to set up our instruments in the snow storm that had started, we decided to take refuge in one of the houses. When we knocked at one of them, three old ladies opened the door. We explained our situation and told them we were American soldiers, which brought forth several, "ou la la's." They insisted that we enter. We brought a case of rations with us and helped them to prepare the food, which we shared with them. We were the first Americans they had ever seen. After the meal and several glasses of their rare old wine, our conversational French began to improve, so that when we left we had agreed to move into one of their spare rooms the following morning. We didn't know it at the time of course, but that was to be our home for the next four months.

The house, we learned, was almost three hundred years old. It was typically French, with stone walls two feet thick and covered with pink plaster. It was almost flush with the road, except for a stone terrace and two poplar trees. There wasn't a house in town with an inside stairway, and this one was no exception. We reached our room by the stairs on the side of the house, which led to huge iron hinged double doors. These opened into our room. There was absolutely no plumbing in the house, not even running water, and no electricity. Yet the house was nobly furnished with fine old sturdy pieces, practically museum items.

Besides the five of us and an Italian officer, the three sisters were the only occupants of the house. They were all old maids, and the youngest, Venus, was nearing the half century mark at least. They were by far the wealthiest family in the community. Before the war they had operated a hotel and "Brasserie" in the house. But now that there wasn't even enough traffic to scare the chickens off the road, and no food to serve, they just served wine to the village cronies who gathered in the big, low-ceilinged front room around the fireplace. These old men were true Corsicans, even to the beards, long pipes, and corduroy coats.

We soon found out that women do all of the work in Corsica. They carry all the water from the rivers or village fountains to their homes. They chop the

wood, gather the deadwood for the fireplaces, beat their laundry on boards or stones at the river banks, gather at the community outdoor oven to bake the week's supply of bread, and handle the few money transactions that are necessary. From personal observation and a bit of inquiring, I've found that the men "take off" in great haste every morning, purporting to be on their way to a hunting party, whereas in reality they usually end up in a bar in one of the neighboring villages. As I have said, in the evening they gather around a fire and talk about the day's events and the good old days of Corsica. I've heard it said that when a baby is born in a family, the husband goes to bed for a week and receives visitors and gifts of congratulations, while the mother goes on about her household chores.

We used to sit and talk with the sisters about America and what a wonderful country it was. They were willing listeners and were amazed at our tales of life in the States. They finally decided that they would visit the States after the war. We had heard that before from every French and Italian family we had met in our travels. But these women had never even been to the other side of the island. One of them had been to a large town on the northern tip of the island. This great event had happened in her youth and she was still talking about it.

One chilly evening we returned from our work on the field to find the sisters crouched around the hearth in the main room, roasting small birds. They had been out during the day trapping the birds, and were preparing them as a special treat for us. The birds were a pathetic sight. They were similar in size to sparrows. Their feathers had been picked and they were tied to sticks, with their heads still attached and dangling in the glowing embers. It was quite an effort for us to eat the birds and assume pleased expressions. The wine with the meal saved us however, and we managed to finish without a casualty in the group. But one of the boys had to rush out the back door as soon as he had finished. We explained that he wasn't used to the wine.

Spring arrived as we were finishing the final plan of the air field. Marie, the oldest of the sisters, was working on some artichokes in her garden, the old men had shed their heavy coats, and the river was high from the melting snow. We learned that the entire village was planning a party for us. Bottles of rare old *vin blanc* were beginning to appear in the house. Sunday clothes were being aired in the neighboring yards, and Venus had dusted the ancient phonograph.

The party was held in the big room of our house. The wine flowed profusely, and there were many toasts to start the ceremonies. Some younger people had been invited from the nearby town of Ventiserie, and they brought albums of French records, including some by Maurice Chevalier. They started the dancing and we soon joined them. The singing, dancing, and drinking continued until the early hours of the morning. In the midst of a rousing French song we heard the familiar sound of a motorcycle pulling up in front of the house. It was the Lieutenant. He brought with him our orders to return to Naples. We had to leave that day. This sad news sobered the entire crowd, and we suddenly realized that we would have to leave our peaceful retreat and return to the world of G.I.'s, inspections, mess kits, and numerous other things that make army life so monotonous.

As our small convoy of motorcycle, jeep, and trailer pulled out of Travo, scaring the chickens off the road, we looked back to see the old house. The sisters were standing in the doorway, with their aprons to their eyes, and we heard shouts of "Bon voyage" and, "come back some day."

Federico Garcia Lorca  
SONG OF THE SUMMONED

My solitude without rest!  
Little eyes of my body  
large eyes of my horse,  
do not close through the night  
nor look to the other side  
where calm a dream *recedes*  
of thirteen ships.  
My eyes are clear and hard  
sleepless squires,  
my eyes look to the north  
of metals and rocks  
there where my veinless body  
consults the frozen cards.

The thick water bulls  
charge at the youths  
who bathe in the moons  
of their undulate horns.  
And the hammers sing  
over the sleeping rushes  
the sleeplessness of the rider  
the sleeplessness of the steed.

The twenty-fifth of June  
they said to Amargo:  
—Now if you like you can cut  
the laurels in your patio.  
Paint a cross on the door  
and put your name beneath  
because hemlocks and nettles  
will spring from your side  
and needles of new plaster  
will gnaw at your shoes.

It will be at night, in the dark,  
on the magnetic mounts  
where the water bulls  
are drinking the dreaming rushes.  
Ask for lights and bells.  
Learn to cross your hands  
and taste the cold airs  
of metals and rocks.  
For inside two months  
you will lie in a shroud.

A sword of nebula  
moves in the air of *Santiago*.  
Stern silence of turned shoulder  
spills from the bulging sky.

The twenty-fifth of June  
Amargo opened his eyes,  
and the twenty-fifth of August  
he lay down to close them.  
Men came to the street  
to see the summoned,  
who had affixed to the wall  
his solitude with rest.  
And the hard roman accent  
of the impeccable sheet  
gave equilibrium to death  
with the symmetry of the shroud.

—Translated by G. TEXIDOR

Dorian Cooke

## POEM OF SOME MEDITATIONS IN A PARTISAN HOSPITAL

*(for the Yugoslav Partisans)*

A wrecking wind outside,  
The sunrise, noon, and sunset have been blown  
Among the pines, like the needles and tide  
Of three huge waters. Somewhere sailors drown,  
Or waterless soldiers lick flint-splints,—who deride  
The owl's voice from some bloody town.

They are not these, who pack  
Along the black planks here, bundles of blank  
Faces and rags, like ships that wait, or like  
Proud trees in sail. Look where the dark seas sank  
Behind those eyes! Or see where the growing snake  
Numbers its fangs in the dead man's shank.

Their wounds are numbered. All  
The wet woods, where, like a thunder, the stones  
Became men, still echo dung for the soil.  
And here they remember the dung, dust, and bones,  
The deaths of the beast of oppression, and call  
To their woods for blood and for signs.

Breath of an early revolt  
Blew down the years of corruption like hail;  
Then came the betrayal and the loud guilt.



And fire came, and famine; and the whole age fell,  
All the seasons and old signs of their world.  
They went to the woods. It was not their fall.

And there the great green days  
Of their anger compelled, though hunger killed  
And cold and wounds. When death has a human face,  
There is joy too where living dawns are called,  
Whose light bleeds on like music through the trees,  
And cries, "No return till this anger is cold."

We who remember Spain  
And the angers and agonies there, who grieve  
For her graves, now gather a faith and a sign;  
For the wind shall work war, and the slave-salt-wave  
Be as a lion with blood sucked from the sun.  
Listen to the call the wet woods weave!

Peter Little

## BIRTHDAY IN WEST AFRICA

I who a year ago  
Was twenty-five years young  
Am twenty-six years old and know  
I have begun to die: am even  
Already a little dead.  
My yellowed skin rots,  
Sprouts a red fungus,  
Wraps to my flesh  
The dank smell of the mangrove swamp.

My mind that a year ago  
Boiled like a volcano, erupting  
Flames, hot lava, ashes, cinders,  
Charred dross; but also craggy rocks,  
Is become a stagnant pool.  
The greenish scum is calm;

If you disturb it  
You will only find  
The dank smell of the mangrove swamp.

We who wait  
Have not the fine-drawn agony  
Of our fighting comrades,  
Concert-pitch nerves shrilling  
At higher and higher frequencies,  
But waiting,  
While the sun thrusts knives through our eyes  
And Death reaches out lazily  
From the swamps or the dry elephant-grass,  
We cultivate our private madness.

People will stare  
At those who return; and say  
"They have strange eyes."

Lawrence Little

## SIGNALS SECTION

Be pleasant with these men,  
Some are old time soldiers; some  
Are raw from families, and smart  
At every khaki clatter on their heart.  
A few welcome the company, after the crumb  
They knew as friendliness in towns  
Where banged the bleating pinstripe clowns  
Upon their Commerce kettledrum.

Then, there was always work, without end,  
Though work to fools is its own end,  
And Finance, that's too cut-throat for a friend  
Jumped on the youngsters, pick-a-back,  
And took them from this corner into that  
From nine till six, or seven until eight;  
From slight of sun till black.

And some grouse, saturnine,  
Wrestle what's unfair and miss the fine,  
And sit upon an ill-admitting spine  
To wait discomfort; rub their sores in brine.

Yet, if I hold them up, I show you but yourselves,  
Haphazardly; we khaki toys  
Are you removed from graded shelves  
And have your mannerisms, make your noise:  
Are timid Pucks turned murderous elves  
This civil world employs.

Raymond Queneau

## DEAF IS THE NIGHT

Deaf is the night, the shadow, the fog,  
Deaf is the tree, deaf the pebble,  
Deaf is the hammer on the block,  
Deaf is the sea and deaf the owl.

Blind is the night and blind the stone,  
Blind the grass and spikes of grain,  
Blind is the mole beneath the earth  
Blind is the pit within the fruit.

Mute is the night and misery  
Mute are the fields and the prairie,  
Mute is the clearness of the air,  
Mute the woods, the lake, the cry,

Infirm is the whole of nature  
Infirm are the beasts and rocks  
Infirm is the caricature,  
Infirm the madman setting type.

But who sees? Who hears? Who speaks?

—Translated by WILLIAM MEAD

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## FIRST STATEMENT PRESS

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## NOTES

RICHARD GUGGENHEIMER is director of the Art department at Briarcliff Junior College. DR. WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS recently completed a full-length play which should (but may not) be produced on Broadway. VIVIENNE KOCH teaches at Columbia and writes for the *Sewanee Review*, *PMLA*, New York Herald-Tribune Books, etc. STUART DAVIS is one of the best painters now working in America. RALSTON CRAWFORD was recently discharged from the U.S. Army; some of his recent work is being reproduced in the forthcoming *New Directions* annual. WILLIAM MEAD, editor of our previous issue, is a student at the University of Maryland, where he was associated with the *Maryland Quarterly*. NORMAN MACLEOD directed the Creative Writing Program at the University of Maryland (1942-44), is in charge of the publication of the *Briarcliff Quarterly*, and will teach professional writing this summer at Lehigh University; he is the author of two novels and four books of poetry. JEAN WAHL has recently returned to the Sorbonne as Professor of Philosophy. GORDON SYMES, after a short sojourn at Camp Ritchie, has returned to his home in Oxford, England. PAUL ELUARD was the editor of *L'Eternelle Revue* during the period of its underground publication in France. GINNY HILL is a creative writing major at Briarcliff Junior College.

HOWARD NEMEROV and JEAN GARRIGUE are two of the most talented of the young American poets. PARKER TYLER is Associate Editor of *View*. DENIS DEVLIN is First Secretary of the Irish Legation, Washington. LEANE ZUGSMITH is a well-known American writer and FRED URQUHART is one of the best British short story writers. LOUIS ARAGON is a French novelist and poet; ROLAND MATHIAS is English; and MAY SARTON, American poet and novelist, will be this summer Poet-in-Residence at Southern Illinois Normal University at Carbondale. HERBERT CAHOON is a librarian.

HARDIMAN SCOTT is a British poet; EDOUARD RODITI is now in France; BARTLETT and WINTERS have just returned from five years in Mexico. NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE is one of the editors of *The Wind and the Rain* (England) and HARRY ROSKOLENKO, American representative of *Angry Penguins*, is returning in June to Australia. LISTON OAK is editor of the *New Leader*; F. C. GOLFFING was discharged recently from the U.S. Army. ARTHUR EMPTAGE lives in Westport, Connecticut; MARTHA GRAHAM needs no introduction. DR. C. WRIGHT MILLS is Associate Professor of Sociology at Columbia University. DR. CHARLES CHURCHILL teaches Sociology at Briarcliff Junior College where DR. LILI GONDA, formerly of the Hungarian Royal University of Budapest, teaches French. EUGENE D. HEIL, returned veteran, is a student at the University of Maryland. G. TEXIDOR is a New Zealand writer who translated for the *Briarcliff Quarterly* a poem by LORCA. DORIAN COOKE is a Cornishman. PETER LITTLE and LAWRENCE LITTLE, British writers, sent their poems to us while in service at far-flung outposts of the British Empire. RAYMOND QUENEAU has contributed to *Poésie*, *Fontaine*, and *Les Lettres Françaises*.